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SEVERAL
DISCOURSES

On the following

SUBJECTS:

Of remembering GOD
our CREATOR in
Youth.

Of Gratitude, or Thankf-
giving, to GOD, for
his *Mercy* and *Good-
ness*; Two Sermons.

Of Casting our Care on
GOD; Two Sermons.

Of Thinking on our
Ways.

The Witnesses of Christ's
Resurrection proved to
be valid.

Of the Effusion of the
HOLY GHOST
after Christ's Ascensi-
on.

Printed at the earnest Request of the Hearers.

To which is, by Desire, added

A SERMON preach'd before the Assembly
of MINISTERS in EXON.

By SAMUEL WESTCOTT.

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by the Booksellers. 1762.





T H E
P R E F A C E.

*H*AVING for many Years ago been requested by several of my Hearers to publish some Discourses which may be useful for their Families, I have at length complied.

I now recommend them to the serious Perusal of those who joined in this Request, and to any others who may think fit to read them. May the Divine Blessing render them useful and profitable! Amen.

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Of Remembering God our Creator in Youth.

ECCLESIASTES XII. I.

*Remember now thy Creator in the
Days of thy Youth.*

IT will add great Weight to the Counsel here given, if we consider what an eminent Degree of Wisdom God gave the Author of it, and that he writ this Book in an Advanced Age. He had full Experience of the World in his high exalted Station: He unhappily immersed himself deeply in sensual Pleasures. Being at length brought to Repentance, and a proper Sight of his past Errors, he, in this Book, declares that the World can present or offer nothing but a Scene of Vanity, and that Happiness is not to be obtained by any the most agreeable Prospects it can propose; and, as the Fruit of his Experience, he assures us that the
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highest Enjoyments of Life cannot furnish a Happiness for the Soul of Man, and that nothing can constitute a firm Basis of Happiness, but Wisdom, Virtue, Holiness, and the Fear of God. *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth.*

In explaining and recommending this excellent Advice given in these Words, I shall do these three Things :

- I. *Inquire what is that Remembrance of God which is enforced.*
- II. *In what Relation we are to remember Him ; and that is, as our Creator.*
- III. *Prove, by sundry Reasons and Arguments, that Youth is the fittest and best Season for remembering God ; or that 'tis highly expedient, useful, and necessary, that young Persons should thus remember God their Creator.*

I. I shall inquire into the Nature of the Duty directed to ; and that is, *To remember God.*

Remembrance of God supposes a Belief of his Being, and some Knowledge of him. 'Tis not a superficial transient Thought of
God,

God, which soon vanishes, and leaves no good Impression ; but of such a Nature as is attended and followed with a good Effect on Heart and Life, which is here meant by *remembering God*. 'Tis a *practical* Remembrance that SOLOMON recommends. These three Things will explain it: 1st, 'Tis a *reverential* Remembrance of God ; 2dly, An *affectionate Devotional* Remembrance ; and consequently, in the 3d Place, 'Tis a *practical* Remembrance of God, or such as influences the Life, and leads us to obey God's Commandments.

1st, In these Words SOLOMON recommends to Young Persons a *reverential* Remembrance of God. God is possessed of all those Perfections, and Excellencies, which justly claim, and call for, the Tribute of our highest Reverence, and the supreme Veneration of all Rational Intelligent Beings. His Power is irresistible ; Who shall not fear Him, before whom the whole Creation is as nothing, and Vanity ? He is the Lord God Almighty ; who then shall not fear, and glorify Him ? Who can conceive how happy and blessed the God of all Power is able to make his Creatures, or how miserable they must be who fall under the Effects of his Displeasure ? Who knoweth the Power of his Anger ? Our Saviour therefore ad-

vifes his Disciples to *fear him who hath Power to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell; yea, I say to you, fear him*, MATTH. x. 28. compared with LUKE xii. 5. This *Omnipotent* Being is also *Omniscient*; which ought to increase a reverential Remembrance of him in all our Minds: Nothing can be hid from his All-penetrating Eye; his Understanding is infinite. Remember too that he is *Omnipresent*, and fills all Places with his Immensity. Whatever close Retirement any may have from the View of Fellow-Mortals, remember God is alway present with you; for *in him you live, move, and have your Being*. The Darkness and the Light are both alike to him. Though the Eye of Sense cannot see him, being invisible, and absolutely immaterial, yet by Faith we ought to set the Lord alway before us. Thus of MOSES 'tis said, that he *saw Him* who is *invisible*, Heb. xi. 27. Though finite Minds cannot comprehend how an Infinite Spirit, as God is, should be in all Places at one and the same Time, yet that is no Reason it should be denied. Remember an Omniscient and Omnipresent Deity so as to reverence him above all; for he is acquainted not only with the most retired and secret Actions of his Creatures, but with their very Thoughts and Intentions. The Remembrance of God, cloathed with these Perfections,

fections, will promote a reverential Fear of him.

2dly, The Remembrance of God which SOLOMON recommends is an *affectionate devotional* Remembrance, or such as is attended with the supreme Love of God, and Devotedness of our Hearts to him. The irresistible Power of God, abstractly considered, may promote a Fear of a servile Nature: We are therefore to remember God not only as an All-powerful Being, but as Infinitely Wise, Good, and Gracious. This Idea, and Remembrance of him, will produce a filial Fear of God, and strengthen our *Love* to him. Goodness in a created Being attracts our Love, and inward Esteem. What is the Goodness which Creatures have, but a Ray from God, the Fountain of Mercy and Goodness? Should not He, who is essentially, immutably, and eternally *Good* and *Gracious*, be loved, and esteemed supremely? Who that considers and remembers God the Fountain of Goodness, but must find his Heart powerfully attracted, and drawn towards him? View the Goodness of God in the constant Supplies you have from him; taste and see that the Lord is good; meditate on the Glories he hath prepared for them that love him; what rich Provision he hath made for your everlasting Welfare,

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Welfare and Happiness ; and then ask yourselves, Ought not this Infinitely Good and Gracious God to be *loved above all* ? 'Tis, no Doubt, such an *affectionate devotional Remembrance* of God which is here intended.

3dly, 'Tis a *practical* Remembrance, or such as is attended with an obediential Regard to all God's *Commandments*. Where there is a Reverence and Love of God, and a sincere Devotedness of Heart to him, it will have this *practical Influence* on the *Life*. He who has an internal Veneration of God, and a sincere Love to him, will certainly express it in his Words and Actions. See the 13th Verse of this Chapter. Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole Matter ; what is the Result of all his Inquiry after Happiness ; where is it to be found, after all his fruitless Endeavours to seek it in Worldly Grandeur, in vast Riches, in political Wisdom, or in sensual Indulgences ? Being disappointed in seeking Happiness for the Soul in such Things as these, he concludes that the whole Duty of Man, Man's chief Wisdom, Interest, and Happiness, is to be found only in *fearing God and keeping his Commandments*. Wherever there is a Reverence and Fear of God, and sincere Love to him, this will be the happy Fruit and Consequence. And this is that Remembrance
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which is here meant. But, on the contrary, of the Wicked, who cast off the Fear of God, and break his Commandments, they are said *to forget God; he is not in all their Thoughts.* If a Thought of God come in- to their Minds, they are uneasy, and do what they can to thrust it out.

Having explained the Nature of this Duty which is here recommended to Young Persons, I proceed, in the second Place,

II. To take Notice of the Notion and *Relation* wherein God is to be remembered, and that is, as the *Creator*; *Remember now thy Creator.*

This calls on us to contemplate the primary Blessing we receive from God; namely, the Favour & Benefit of *Creation*. There has been a Dispute, whether there are any *innate Ideas* imprinted on the Soul, as it comes out of the Hand of God. If there be any Idea born with the human Mind, 'tis most natural to think, that it should have the *Idea* of its *Maker*: But whether it have this *originally* or no, 'tis certain *in this Sense* it may be called *natural*; that is, 'tis such as the Mind is very susceptible of, as soon as it becomes capable of making Reflections on *the Works of Creation*. Whoever will at-
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tend to these will be led naturally to inquire, How came this vast Fabrick of the Universe into Being? To suppose it should proceed from *Chance* and *Accident* is to offer an Affront to the *Reason* of our *Minds*. The rational attentive Soul disdains and rejects the Notion at the first Proposal: Consequently we are led by the Things that are seen to acknowledge ONE ETERNAL CAUSE AND ORIGINAL OF ALL THINGS. *The invisible Things of God are clearly seen by the Things which are made, even his Eternal Power and Godhead*; for not discerning of which the very Heathens are said by the Apostle to be inexcusable, *Rom. i. 20.* So that by the visible Creatures we may easily ascend in our Thoughts to the invisible Almighty Creator, who, the Light of our own Minds will inform us, must be possessed of all possible Excellencies and Perfections. From the Nature and Grandeur of his Works we form our Judgment of his Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, which he must necessarily have, and that to a Degree surpassing all human Thought and Expression. SOLOMON, therefore, recommends to *young Persons* the *Remembrance of God their Creator*; for if they will any way attend to the Voice and Dictates of Reason, they will inquire after GOD their MAKER, and consider their Obligation to the *Author of their Being*, and Preserver

server of their *Lives*, upon whom they have a constant and necessary Dependance.

God is stiled *the Father of Spirits*, HEBR. xii. 9. When the Body returns to the Dust, the Spirit returns to God who gave it; the 7th Verse of the Chapter wherein is the Text. The Spirit, when separated from the Body, returns to God, the Judge of all. He who gave the Spirit hath a Right to call for it when he pleases; for all Souls are his; he is the God of the Spirits of all Flesh. The Remembrance of God as our Creator, and the Father of our Spirits, will naturally lead any rational Mind to acknowledge a peculiar Obligation to him, who placed us in such a noble Order and Rank in his Creation. When we see a vast Number of Creatures in a State of Subjection, and Inferiority, how distinguishing is the Goodness of God to those into whom he hath breathed living Souls, formed after his own Image, endowed with intellectual Powers and Abilities; with Reason, which is the Glory of the human Mind, if rightly improved; but will turn to our Everlasting Shame and Confusion if it be degraded and debased, by giving in to the criminal Indulgence of sensual Passions and carnal Affections.

Further; the Remembrance of God as
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our *Creator* will almost necessarily lead us to remember and consider him as our *Judge*. How natural is it for the Mind of Man to reason thus:— God, who hath furnished and adorned our Minds with the sublime Powers of Understanding, Liberty, and Freedom of Choice, and who hath planted in us a *Conscience*, which is a *domestic Judge* and Monitor, which, after the Commission of any wicked unjust Actions, fills the Soul with Remorse, and Uneasiness; and with Peace, Serenity, and Pleasure, after the doing virtuous Actions: Must not this plainly shew us the Design of our Creator, *viz.* That he will certainly call his Reasonable Creatures to an Account for their Choice and Conduct? I say, the very Notion of God as our Creator will lead us to consider him as our Judge; for if he will call any to Account, who should they be but those who are under peculiar Obligations to him, having received very distinguishing Favours and Talents? Can we think that God breathed into Man a Rational Soul only for a few Days, to enjoy the Pleasures of this World, and then to be extinguished, and never to exist in any future State? Can any imagine that the Father of our Spirits gave us such Powers of Reason, and Understanding, and planted in us a Conscience, whereby we are either excused and acquitted, or
accused

accused and condemned, by the Sentence of our own Minds, according to the Nature and Quality of our Actions, vicious or virtuous; and, after all this, that God should never intend to call us to any Account? The very Notion of God as our Creator will lead us to remember and consider him as our Judge.

They who have rightly improved the Gifts of Nature, Providence, and Grace, answerably to what they have received, may, whenever the Father of Spirits calls for them, chearfully resign their Spirits into his Hands; *Let them that suffer according to the Will of God commit the keeping of their Souls to him in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator,* I. Epist. PETER, iv. 19. As soon as any come to the Use of Reason, and are capable of making Reflection, they should remember God their Creator, and their Obligations to him. They should consider upon what merciful Design God gave them their Beings, what are the distinguishing Privileges they enjoy, what Gifts they have received from God, what Talents he hath intrusted them with; and consider themselves as shortly to be summoned to an Account. The very Thought of our Creator will fix in our Minds a due Reverence and Love of God, who called us from nothing into Being; who

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hath placed us in the noble Order of Rational Creatures, and will therefore certainly call us to an Account. The very Frame of our Natures, the Powers and Faculties with which we are furnished, naturally lead us to such a Thought, and Conduct. To forget God our Creator, to be unmindful of the Rock that begat us, must be acting an unnatural, disingenuous, and ungrateful Part.

I go on to the third Thing proposed; which is this, That the Season of *Youth* is the fittest and best for *remembering God our Creator*; or that it is, for various Reasons, highly expedient, useful, and necessary, that Persons in Youth should thus remember God their Creator, so as to reverence, love, and devote their Hearts to him, and their Lives to his Service. That such may be prevailed upon thus to exercise and employ their Reasonable Powers *in early Life*, I would offer the following Arguments: And may God make them successful!

1st, God *requires* this, and 'tis peculiarly acceptable to him when *Young* Persons so remember him as to fear, love, and devote themselves to him, and his Service.

2dly, You know not but *this* may be the *only* Time you may have for remembering
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and devoting yourselves to God and to his Service.

3dly, If you live to an Advanced Age, the Consideration of having thus rightly employed your early Days will be the great Support of Old-Age.

4thly, They who waste the best Part of Life, forgetting God, and neglecting his Service, are very seldom brought to any right practical Remembrance of him in After-life.

5th, Remember God in *Youth*, because you are accountable to him.

6th, This will afford the best and most satisfying Evidence of Sincerity in Religion.

7th, Remember God in *Youth*, otherwise Temptations to sin will easily gain Ground over and vanquish you.

Finally, This will prepare for an early Death, or will be the great Support under the Infirmities of Age, and in the nearest Views of Death and Eternity.

1st, Young Persons should remember God their Creator, because he requires this; and
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this is in a peculiar Manner *acceptable* to him. Who should be revered and loved above all, but your Maker and Preserver? How weighty and forcible is the first and great Commandment, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, with all thy Mind, with all thy Soul, and with all thy Strength? This Commandment carries the utmost Force of Reason and Argument with it, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*, from whom thou derivedst thy Being, and all the numerous Blessings of Life, and to whose free Grace and overflowing Goodness thou art indebted, and obliged for the most agreeable Hopes of a blessed Immortality. Who that weighs this can hesitate one Moment whether he shall give his Heart to his *Creator* or no? Or whether he shall place his chief Affections on *Creatures*, and *Earthly Things*? Let not your Hearts be alienated from God by sensual Pleasures, and the Vanities of this transitory Life. God's Claim to your supreme Love and Esteem is rightful, and indisputable. Moreover 'tis in a special Manner *acceptable* to God, when *Young Persons* bethink themselves of his Right to their Hearts and Services, and acknowledge it not only by Words and Profession, but by their Actions; *They that seek him early shall find him*, Prov. viii. 17. We read of OBADIAH that he *feared the Lord from his Youth*

Youth, I. Kings, xviii. 12. And 'tis mentioned in a way of Encomium concerning King JOSIAH, that while he was yet *Young* he began to enquire after the God of DAVID his Father, II. *Chron.* xxxiv. 3. This is the first Reason to prevail on Persons in Youth to remember God their Creator, because he *requires* this of them, has an undoubted Right to be served with our best Powers, and takes a peculiar Delight and Complacency in those who choose his Service in their early Days.

2dly, Another Reason and Argument for thus remembering God in *Youth* is this: You know not but this may be the *only* Time and Season you may have for this great and necessary Duty. Young Persons are apt to flatter themselves with the pleasing Hope of many Years to come; but such Expectations of long Life do often prove vain and delusive. What small Number, in Proportion, do ever arrive to any considerable Number of Years? 'Tis strange, therefore, that any should defer doing that *immediately*, which, if they dye before it is done, they are lost and undone for ever. There is nothing more uncertain than Life. Nothing that has a Fitness to fix in our Minds a Sense of the Brevity and Shortness of Human Life is omitted in Holy Scriptures.

tures. Since then you may *dye in Youth*, as Thousands of others do, many of whom had, to outward Appearance, as great Probability of living to an Advanced Age as you can have, this is an Argument which every one must immediately see to be forcible and weighty. If it be necessary *ever* to remember God, to fear and reverence him, to give your Hearts and Services to him, 'tis necessary to do it *immediately*, and *without any Delay*, because you have not a Certainty of a *Moment* beyond the present. Should any go on in a criminal Forgetfulness of God, they may dye in this wretched State of Alienation from God: And what the miserable Condition of such shall be, you may read in *Psalms ix. 17. The Wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the Nations that forget God.*

3dly, Should you live to an Advanced Age, this Remembrance of God, and chusing him in early Life for your Guide and Portion, will afford great Support and Consolation. What is the Comfort of Old Age but the Reflection on a Life well spent? No one ever repented of doing this too soon. They who neglected this do usually repent, and are filled with Sorrow. The Consideration of and Reflection upon an early Devotedness to God, and of having in the general

neral Course of Life acted suitably, and agreeably hereunto, will be followed with great Serenity, and Satisfaction of Mind. Such may assure themselves that God will not forsake them in Old-Age. See how DAVID pleads with the Almighty in Prayer by this Argument, *Psalm lxxi. 9. Cast me not off in the Time of Old-Age; forsake me not when my Strength faileth!* Being grown Old, and feeble by the Infirmities that attend it, he stood most in need of God's Help, and gracious Presence. He could with great Confidence and Hope offer such a Petition to God, as in the 17th and 18th Verses, *O God, thou hast taught me from my Youth; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous Works.* Now also when *I am Old, and grey headed, O God, forsake me not!* How honourable, and amiable in the Esteem of God, and of all wise and good Men, is *the hoary Head, when 'tis found in the Way of Righteousness!* It is called *a Crown of Glory,* Prov. xvi. 31.

4thly, They who waste away the best Part of Life, that is, the Days of their Youth, in a wretched Forgetfulness of God, and in a criminal Neglect of his Service, are very seldom brought to any serious Remembrance of him in Old-Age. Examples of such who mispent the Morning of Life in
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the Service of Sin, and in the Indulgence of their sensual Passions, who at last are brought to true Repentance, are very rare. The Choice that is made in Youth usually is adhered to throughout the remaining Part of Life. Vice gains Ground, and is rooted by repeated evil Actions. The Love of Sin is strengthened, and Forgetfulness of God becomes habitual. On the other hand, when Persons in Youth are so far from alienating & estranging their Hearts and Ways from God, that they make a happy Choice, and yield themselves to him, their Virtue usually grows with their Years. Their Goodness is not like a Morning Cloud, or an early Dew, which soon disappears, and is evaporated, but like the Light of the Sun, which shineth more and more to the perfect Day. Such have an increasing Pleasure in walking in the Ways of God and Religion. They find *Wisdom's Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and that all her Paths are Peace.* That Christ's Yoke, or Government, is easy, mild, and gracious, and his Burthen light. The Meditation of God is sweet to their Minds; Almighty God is in their Esteem infinitely amiable and glorious. They remember him, and are comforted. Having devoted themselves to God in the Morning of Life, they hence derive most solid Satisfaction, whenever they review the happy Choice they made. When
God,

God, whom they chose for the Guide of their Youth, is present to their Minds by *Faith and Meditation*, they have substantial Peace and Joy. Since then the first Impression that is made on the Mind, whether it be a virtuous or a vicious one, is very seldom * worn off; this shews the great Advantage of a *Religious Education*, and what great Cause they have to bless God, who have been thus, by his kind Providence, favoured with good Instructions, and good Examples, and the Divine Blessing attending all. Such distinguishing Privileges call for Thanksgiving and Praise to God, and for a suitable Improvement. They who have been destitute of such Helps and Advantages should, when they are come to Years of Discretion and Understanding, seriously remember God, and choose him for their Portion and Happiness. Let not your Forgetfulness of God become fixed and habitual. They who fear the Lord from their Youth love him sincerely, and choose his Service: As Years increase, their Knowledge of, Love to, and Delight in God will grow stronger; their Title to and Interest in the Almighty, as their God, will be more clear and unclouded.

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5thly, Young

* *Quo semel est imbuta recens servabit odorem
Testa diu.*

5thly, Young Persons should remember their Creator and Judge, because they are accountable to him for their Choice and Conduct. Mankind are very apt to have too slight Thoughts of Sins committed in Youth: But if they would weigh the Matter maturely, they would see Reason to alter their Sentiments: For when any Person is come to Years of Reason and Understanding, from that Time, no Doubt, he becomes accountable to God for his Actions. Some become responsible for their Choice and Conduct sooner than others, according to the Measure of the natural Gift of Reason and Intelligence they have, and the Helps and Advantages they have, superior to many others. God will judge without Respect of Persons. Let no one therefore think that the Sins which are committed in Youth are venial, or very easily pardoned; for if any have attained to the Exercise of Reason and Understanding, and knowing God's Commandments, or having a Capacity of knowing them, do wilfully break and violate them, they are, no Doubt, responsible and accountable to God for their Choice and Behaviour; for to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him 'tis Sin. This is another Reason why all as soon as they come to the Use and Exercise of Reason and Reflection should remember God,
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and consecrate themselves to his Service, for they are accountable to him who is Judge of all. So, in that awful Vision which St. JOHN had of the final Judgment, he saw *the Dead, Small and Great, stand before God*, REV. XX. 12. By the *Small and Great* may be meant Rich and Poor, Young and Old, all who were arrived to a Capacity of being judged every one according to his Works.

6thly, A due Remembrance of God in the Days of Youth will afford a good Evidence of your Sincerity in Religion, and consequently will give strong Consolation. The greater and more numerous the Temptations are to draw off the Heart from God, the greater Degree of Virtue and Resolution is required to make such cleave and adhere to Him and Religion. When Examples of Vice are many, and the World appears in its most alluring Charms, as it does usually to Young Persons; when Snares of Vanity offer, tending to ensnare their Minds, and captivate their Hearts; if in the midst of all any are found maintaining such a worthy reverential Regard to God as establishes them in their Adherence to him, and the Ways of Virtue, a Sense and Consciousness of this will bring such Evidence of Sincerity and Integrity in Religion, as will be a Spring and Source of constant Satisfaction, This suggests

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suggests another Reason why Young Persons should remember their Creator, who is Omniscient and Omnipresent, because in this Time evil Passions are usually strongest and most impetuous, and Temptations to sin have their greatest Force. A due Sense of God fixed on the Mind will be an Over-Balance, and render you victorious over all the Snares and Stratagems of Satan; and the Temptations with which the World abounds, and by which they who cast the Thoughts of God out of their Minds are easily overcome. They who have a fixed and habitual Remembrance of God have such a Fear of him as restrains from all sinful Departures from him. Such will say, as NEHEMIAH (Chap. v. 15.) who having taken Notice how former Governors before him had been guilty of Extortion and Oppression, adds, *but so did not I, because of the Fear of God.* Another Instance and Example to confirm this Observation, that a right Remembrance of God, attended with a reverential Fear of him, is a most powerful Restraint from Sin in a Season of the greatest Temptation and Trial, is that of JOSEPH: *How can I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God?*

Lastly, This Remembrance of God I have been describing will prepare for an early
Death,

Death, if God hath appointed thereunto; or if Life should be protracted, and lengthened out to Old-Age, the Consideration of Time spent in the Service of God, and according to the Rules of his Word, will support under the Decays and Infirmities of Age. When those *evil Days come wherein Men shall say, they have no Pleasure in them*, if any thing in the World can yield any Satisfaction or Delight, it must be the Testimony of a good Conscience, and agreeable Reflections on Time spent to some good Purpose. They who have remembered God, so as to serve him faithfully, & have persevered herein, will find, that though the Days of Old-Age are troublesome and burthensome, attended with many corporal Infirmities, yet this will be a most solid Pleasure to consider that they have walked with God, lived soberly, righteously, and godlily; that they have done *justly, loved Mercy, and walked humbly with God*. Such may assure themselves, that, through the Mercy of God, and the Merits of their Saviour, Death will be so far from separating them from God, that it will introduce them into his blissful Presence, where is *Fulness of Joy, and Pleasures for evermore*.

Wherefore, let all *in the Days of their Youth*, all who are in the Morning of Life,
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lay to Heart this most excellent and important Advice and Counsel given in the Text. Consider the Nature of the Duty recommended, and which has been explained; and the Reasons and Arguments by which it has been enforced: And may God render them effectual and successful! Whoever have lived in a woful Neglect and Forgetfulness of God, let them, *without any Delay*, so think of God and his glorious Perfections, which all Nature displays, and represents to all Rational Beings; so think of him as the Former of your Bodies, and Father of your Spirits, who hath instampt his own Image on your Minds; think of the Relations you stand in to him, your Obligations to and Dependance on him. That you may learn to reverence and love him, devote your Hearts and Lives to him. Remember your Creator, that so your best Powers may be employed in his Service: And whilst you contemplate the noble Powers with which your Souls are furnished, you will be naturally led on to regard him as your *Judge*, to whom you must give an Account. And were this more laid to Heart, it would be an effectual Restraint on those Lusts, and evil Passions, and corrupt Affections, which, for want of being governed by Reason, Conscience, and Religion, hurry on Thousands in Youth to Destruction and Misery, tempo-
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ral and eternal. The 11th Chapter of this Book of ECCLESIASTES, Verse the 9th, *Rejoice, O Young Man, in thy Youth, and let thy Heart cheer thee in the Days of thy Youth, and walk in the Ways of thine Heart, and in the Sight of thine Eyes:* In which Words he seems to give Young Persons an unbounded Licence to gratify their sensual Passions, and carnal Affections: But observe what follows; — *But know thou that for all these Things God will bring thee into Judgment.* Know and consider this awful Doctrine of a future Day of Account; and then live such a thoughtless Life of sensual Pleasure if thou canst. Thus when SOLOMON had recommended to young Persons the Remembrance of their Creator, he does not forget, in the Close of the Chapter, to put them also in Remembrance that God would certainly call them to Account; *for God shall bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*



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Of Thanksgiving,

Of Thanksgiving, or Gratitude to
God for his Mercy and Goodness.

TWO SERMONS.

PSALM C. 4, 5.

Enter into his Gates with Thanksgiving, and into his Courts with Praise : Be thankful to him, and bless his Name ; for the Lord is good, his Mercy is everlasting, and his Truth endureth to all Generations.

THIS Book of the *Psalms* has been highly valued by all those who have had a true Spirit of Devotion. We see the Nature of Religion, when it gains Possession of the Heart, expressing itself in loving, fearing, praising, and adoring the Blessed God. Those excellent Persons who composed this Book of *sublime Devotion* are frequently

quently employed in these delightful Duties, and exciting others to do the same. We may see of how great Moment this Duty of praising God, and offering Thanksgiving, is ; for DAVID, whose Soul was filled with Love to God, exercises himself herein, as may easily be observed by any who will, with the least Care and Attention, read this Book of the Psalms. When God favoured him, or his People the *Israelites*, with any Deliverances or Blessings, he immediately composes a Hymn of Praise to the Great and Glorious Author of them. We may see how quickly his grateful Soul was touched and affected with the Goodness of God, for the Publick Favours granted to his Church and People, and how desirous he was to raise and preserve in their Minds the like Sentiments of Gratitude to God for them. In this Psalm he exhorts all who are capable of knowing their Obligations to God their Maker, and who have experienced his Mercy, Goodness, and Faithfulness, to serve him with *Gladness*, to come before his Presence with *Singing* ; and, not to content themselves with *silent Acts of Praise*, but to *enter his Gates with Thanksgiving, and into his Courts with Praise ; be thankful to him, and bless his Name ; for the Lord is good, &c.* — In treating on the Words, I shall observe the following Method.

- I. *Shew that the Goodness and Mercy of God is the Foundation and Reason of Thankfulness and Gratitude.*
- II. *With what Temper, and Disposition of Mind, we should offer our Tribute of Praise and Thanksgiving to God.*
- III. *Give some Directions in order to raise and promote, in all our Souls, that Thankfulness and Gratitude to God for all his Mercies, which is essential to Religion.*
- IV. *Prove this to be a Duty incumbent on all, to "Enter God's Gates with Thanksgiving, and his Courts with Praise; to "be thankful to him, and bless his Name."*

I. I observe, that the Goodness and Mercy of God is the Foundation and Reason of Thankfulness, and Gratitude to him. This is the Reason which the Psalmist here offers, when he would move all to acknowledge *publickly* their Obligations to God, by *Entering his Gates with Thanksgiving; for the Lord is good, his Mercy is from everlasting, &c.*

God is a Being of all possible Perfections and Excellencies, such as irresistible Might and Power, inflexible Justice, unblemished Truth and Faithfulness, immaculate Purity
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and unspotted Holiness, consummate Wisdom, and his Understanding is infinite. He is adored by all the Inhabitants Above as possessed of these Perfections; and all Rational Creatures on Earth, as well as the Angels and perfected Spirits in Heaven, ought to have and preserve the most adoring Sentiments of his Majesty and Glory. But however Excellent and Glorious he is in *Himself*, these Perfections of Power, Justice, Holiness, &c. tend only to raise in our Minds awful Thoughts of him, and fill them with a reverential Dread: But 'tis the Consideration of his eternal and immutable *Goodness*, and *boundless Love*, that inspires with Sentiments of *Thankfulness* and *Gratitude*.

The Grounds of true Religion are a full Belief and Persuasion of the *Existence of God*, and of his *Bounty* and *Goodness* to all who sincerely seek and worship him, according to that of the inspired Author to the *Hebrews*, Chap. xi. 6.: But without *Faith* it is impossible to please him; for *he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him*. When we contemplate the *immense Goodness* of God, and his *tender Mercies* which are over all his Works, that he is not only absolutely and infinitely good in his Nature, but doth good, and with a liberal & bountiful Hand supplies the Wants of

of all his Creatures, *for the Earth is full of his Goodness*, we from hence form the most amiable Idea and Sentiment of him in our Minds. They who will allow themselves Time to meditate on the Divine Goodness, and the *Fruits* of it which they are favoured with every Moment, will find such an Impression on their Souls as will powerfully attract and draw them to *love* a Being of such overflowing Goodness; and the Consideration of his Mercies, which are new every Moment, will naturally, and almost irresistibly prevail on them who have any Ingenuity in their Tempers, and are capable of understanding their Obligations to God, not only *silently in their own Minds* to acknowledge his unmerited Goodness to their Souls and Bodies, but *in the most publick Manner* to celebrate his Praises in *full Assemblies*, that they may move and excite others to join with them in Testimonies of Gratitude, Thanksgiving, and Praise. Thus the devout Psalmist calls on all the Inhabitants of the Earth to *sing Praises* to God with Gladness, to *enter into his Gates with Thanksgiving, and into his Courts with Praise*; *for the Lord is good, &c.* The boundless Goodness of God in bestowing the Comforts of this Life, and inspiring us with the Hopes of eternal Life, and never ending Felicity in his Presence, should raise the noblest Sentiments of Love, Devotion, and Gratitude.

II. I go

II. I go on, in the Second Place, to shew in what Manner, and with what Temper and Disposition of Soul, we should offer our Tribute of Praise and Thanksgiving to God. There are these Three Things which will serve to explain and shew us how to do this in an acceptable Way and Manner.

1st, *This must be done with the united Powers of our Souls.*

2dly, *With an humble Sense of our Unworthiness of the Divine Favours and Blessings.*

And, 3dly, *With Faith in Christ, our great High Priest, whose continual Intercession procures for us the Favour and Acceptance of God our Heavenly Father.*

1st, When we offer our Tribute of Thanksgiving and Praise to God, whether it be in private, or in the publick Assembly, all the Powers of our Souls should be united, and engaged in this heavenly and delightful Exercise. *Psalm ix. 1, 2. I will praise thee, O Lord, with my Heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous Works. I will be glad, and rejoice in thee; I will sing Praises to thy Name, O thou most High.* The most pompous Expressions, if they flow not from a Heart affected and impressed with *a Sense of the Good-*
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ness of God, are but vain Lip-Service, which will be disregarded by him who requires *Truth* in the *inward Parts*, and hath Pleasure only in *Uprightness*. The Understanding, which is the superior Faculty, should be well furnished with the Knowledge of God, and of his adorable Perfections, especially his Goodness, and with a just and warm Sense of our Obligations to him. Thus we shall offer a *Rational and Spiritual Service*, which is suitable to his *Nature*, and sing his Praises with *Grace and Understanding*. What does it signify to praise God with the *Mouth*, if the *Heart* be unemployed, and not at all affected with his boundless Love and Mercy; or to use lofty and sublime *Words*, when, notwithstanding, the *Soul* is no way touched with any proper *Sentiments* of Love and Devotion, and the *Mind* or *Understanding* hath such a mean and poor Furniture of the Knowledge of God and of his Goodness, that the warmer Passions of the *Soul* want the proper Spring and Motive to Gratitude, without which Thankfulness and Gratitude to God cannot be *Rational*, neither will it be *permanent and lasting*. Whenever, therefore, we address to this holy Duty and Exercise, (which we shall often do, if we have any good Measure of a *Devotional Spirit*) we should, with the holy Psalmist, call on our *Souls, and all that is within us*, to bless God's
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holy Name: Reason thus with ourselves in a Way of Preparation for this solemn and spiritual Work and Service; use such a Soliloquy as this: Thou art now, O my Soul, about to engage in a Duty and Service which is the delightful Employment of Angels and perfected Spirits; do not, therefore, compliment him, who is the Fountain of Being and Happiness to the whole Intelligent Creation, with some *verbal Praises*, but see that all the *Rational Powers* of the *Mind*, and warmer *Passions* of thy *Soul*, be employed in celebrating the Praises of God.

2dly, With an humble Sense of our Unworthiness of the Divine Favours and Blessings. With this *lowly Temper of Mind* the sincere Servants of God, whenever they offer'd Thanksgiving and Praise, came into his Presence. Though they delighted in God, and sang his Praises with glad and joyful Hearts, and ascribed all Glory to him, and owned their Obligations to his Goodness, yet at the same Time they retained just Apprehensions of their *Unworthiness in themselves* to receive such Favours and Benefits from him. I. *Chron.* xvii. 16. *David the King came, and sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine House, that thou hast brought me hitherto!* So JACOB, whom God had blessed

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in a remarkable Manner, owns his *Unworthiness*, Gen. xxxii. 9, 10. *And Jacob said, I am not worthy of the least of all the Mercies, and of all the Truth, which thou hast shewed to thy Servant.* Whenever we ascribe Glory to God for his Benefits and Blessings conferred on us, we should have a humble Sense of our *Unworthiness* of receiving them: And the deeper Apprehension we have of this, the greater Degree of Gratitude to God will fill our Souls; as I shall further shew in the Sequel, when I mention some Methods necessary to be observed for the raising and encreasing this Spirit of Thankfulness.

3dly, With reference to CHRISTIANS, their Tribute of Praise must be offered to God by *Faith in Jesus*, our Mediator, and great High Priest, whose *continual Intercession* procures for us Favour and Acceptance with our Heavenly Father. What Blessings we receive from God come to us *through the Mediator*, or in Consideration of what *He* hath done and suffered for us. God blesses us with all spiritual Blessings through *Christ* our *Saviour*; and we are accepted, or taken into a State of Peace and Reconciliation, by *Faith in him*. The Gift of God is eternal Life *through Jesus Christ our Lord*. Our Thanksgivings and Praises will not be accepted, unless they are offered in the pre-
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vailing Name of Jesus our great High Priest. Hence the Apostle exhorts the *Romans* to *present themselves to God, a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ*. Our Duties and Services, being in *themselves* very imperfect, can be acceptable only through the Merits and Intercession of our Saviour. I. Peter, ii. 5. *Ye also, as lively Stones, are built up a spiritual House, an holy Priesthood, to offer up spiritual Sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*. The spiritual Sacrifices which Christians are obliged to offer are Prayers and Praises to God, or Acts of Charity and Mercy towards others; and these become acceptable and grateful to God by our trusting in Christ, and confiding in the Merits and Intercession of Jesus our High Priest, Heb. xiii. 15. *By him, that is. by Christ, let us offer the Sacrifice of Praise to God continually; that is, the Fruit of our Lips, giving Thanks to his Name*. Add to this, all our Acts and Expressions of Praise and Glory to God must be attended with an *holy Life*, Psalm. l. 23. *Whoso offereth Praise, glorifieth God; and to him that ordereth his Conversation aright will I shew the Salvation of God*. They who sincerely praise God for his Mercies, and whose Lives and Conversations are well ordered, shall see the Salvation of God, enjoy that everlasting Felicity and Happiness which God, who cannot lie, or

deceive any, hath promised. This leads me, in the third Place,

III. To give some Directions, necessary to be observed, in order to the raising and promoting our Gratitude and Thanksgiving to God for all his Mercies, which is essential to Religion.

I. We should keep up and maintain in our Minds a Remembrance of God's Favours and Blessings bestowed on ourselves, and also on the Church of God. 'Tis very observable, to this Purpose, when the Royal Psalmist would have all the Powers of his Soul united in blessing God's holy Name, he charges his Soul not to be forgetful of the Divine Benefits. *Psalm ciii. 1, 2. Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy Name: Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits.* He well knew, that a Forgetfulness of God's Benefits conferr'd on him and the *Israelites* would produce a Spirit of vile Ingratitude towards God. 'Tis no wonder that their Praises of God should decline, and be low and languid, who retain not in their Memories the Benefits God hath bestown, and daily bestows. On the other hand, they who frequently revolve in their Minds, and commemorate the Divine Favours, do hereby maintain an habitual

bitual Sense of their Obligations to God, and Dependance on him, and consequently take a very proper Method of encreasing their Gratitude to God. Every Person, therefore, would do well to set apart some Time frequently to consider what God hath done both for Soul and Body: How tender is the Care of our Heavenly Father! How seasonably hath he supplied all our Wants! How precious have his Thoughts of Love to us been! Who can recount his Loving-kindnesses! How great is the Sum of them! Let not a Day pass without some Commemoration of God's Benefits and Favours; but above all let his *spiritual Blessings* dwell on your Minds. They who are not careful to observe this Direction will in time settle and be fixed in an ungrateful Temper; or if they join with others in praising God, it will be only a *Lip-Service*. We should consider what God hath done for us, both as to Soul and Body, and what wonderful Works of Power and Mercy have been wrought for his Church and People. Thus, in the Psalm last mentioned, when DAVID had charged his own Soul to guard against this forgetful unthankful Temper for the Benefits God had conferred on him, he next speaks of God's Favours to the *Israelites*, Verse the 7th, *He made known his Ways to Moses, his Acts to the Children of Israel.* In another Psalm he often

often calls on Men to praise the Lord for his Goodness, and for his wonderful Works to the Children of Men. The oftener we call to Mind the Favours God bestows on us, the more we shall abound in Thanksgiving; for 'tis next to an Impossibility that any should retain these in their Memories without having, and expressing, their Gratitude to Heaven. The Reason why God hath not a better Tribute of Praise from those who every Moment depend on him, is, that Mankind are so prone to be *forgetful of the Rock of their Salvation*, and unmindful of the Benefits they receive from the *Fountain of Goodness*. If our Hearts were often impressed with an affectionate Remembrance of God's great and innumerable Favours to *ourselves*, to *ours*, and to the *Church of God*, we should, with Minds warm with Love and Devotion, be ready to say to each other, *Let us enter his Gates with Thanksgiving, and his Courts with Praise, for the Lord is good.*

2. Regard all your Mercies and Blessings as flowing from God, the never-failing Fountain and Source of all. He is *the Father of Lights, from whom cometh down every good and every perfect Gift*. What you have of temporal Things, 'tis owing to the Bounty of his Providence; what you have and enjoy of a spiritual Nature, is owing to the Riches

Riches and Freeness of his Grace. Let not the Gifts of his Providence alienate your Minds and Affections from God the Giver, or lessen your Esteem for those spiritual Blessings which are of a more excellent and valuable Nature. They who have not only a Supply of their Necessities and Wants, but an Affluence of temporal Things, the Liberalities and Bounty of Providence, should raise a Spirit of Gratitude to God to a very high Degree: But, in the midst of all earthly good Things, which with a bountiful Hand God hath bestown, maintain and express the sublimest Praise and Thanksgiving to God for those Blessings which relate to the Everlasting Welfare and Happiness of your Souls; such as, for your Redemption by Christ, for the Pardon of your Sins, for the Assistance of Divine Grace, for giving Victory over Sin, and for the Hopes the Gospel gives of Eternal Life. Thus when DAVID blesses God for healing Diseases, for redeeming his Life from Destruction; that is, for preserving him when in the Extremity of Danger, and to human Appearance on the Verge of Destruction and Death, for crowning him with Loving-kindness, and with tender Mercies, still in the Front of all these Divine Favours of a temporal Nature, he forgets not to mention the great Mercy of God to be praised and adored, viz. for
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pardoning his Iniquities. Thus he expresses himself, *who forgiveth thine Iniquity.* Whatever you enjoy of the Comforts of this Life, whatever you hope for beyond the Grave, ascribe the Glory of all to the unmerited Love, and boundless Goodness, of God. When surrounded with the Blessings of Providence, say not, it was my Industry, Wisdom of Conduct, and Prudence of Management, is the sole Cause of my Prosperity: This would be, in the Language of the inspired Author, *to burn Incense to your own Drags, and sacrifice to your own Nets:* But remember and acknowledge with Gratitude the Lord your God, whose Blessing, attending human Industry, is the principal Cause of Success. For Mercies of a spiritual Nature, whatever Improvements are made in Religion and Holiness, whatever Victories you may have gained over Temptations, ascribe not the Glory to yourselves, but say, *by the Grace of God I am what I am.*

3. That we may abound in Thanksgiving and Praise, we should labour to have our Minds deeply affected with a Sense of our own Sins, and Unworthiness. Thus we shall be cloathed with Humility; and the more Humility encreases, the more thankful we shall be to the God of all Grace and Goodness. They who know that by Sin against

gainst God they have forfeited their Lives, how will the Sense of this raise them to a very high Measure of Gratitude to God, that he not only hath spared their Lives, but pardoned their Sins, and renewed his Favours and Blessings every Day and Moment! Humility is necessary in order to maintain a lively and an abiding Sense of our Obligation to, and Dependance on, God. They who know that they have by Sin exposed themselves to the Divine Resentment and Displeasure, and that God might justly have bereaved them of all Blessings spiritual and temporal, such will be thankful to the God of all Grace, who, notwithstanding their past Forfeitures, continues his Favours, gives the Comforts of this Life, and the Hopes of a blessed Immortality. Whilst the Soul that is possessed of this amiable Virtue and Grace of Humility is thus employed in these Meditations on its own Demerits, Sins, and Unworthiness, and on the other hand contemplates the Divine Blessings, spiritual and temporal, which in one constant uninterrupted Stream have flowed down from the Fountain of Goodness and Mercy, 'tis transported with Admiration, filled with Gratitude and Praise, and ready to say, *What shall I render to the Lord for all his Benefits?* Humility is necessary in order to preserve and promote a lively Sense of our Obligations to, and De-

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pendance on, God. There are none who have their Hearts so filled with the Praises of God as those who see the great Evil of Sin, and at the same Time the abounding Mercy of God in pardoning their numerous Sins. Such will own their Unworthiness of the least of all God's Mercies, when they reflect upon the Methods of Divine Goodness in reclaiming them from their Iniquities and Wanderings, and turning their Feet from the destructive Paths of Vice into the Ways of his Testimonies, and hereby saving them from future Miseries and Torments. Such will bless the Name of God, and call on all the Powers of their Souls, to unite in this sublime and elevated Devotion and Thanksgiving. None have so grateful a Temper and Disposition of Mind, as those who have a deep Sense of their Unworthiness of the Divine Benefits, and have experienced the Riches, Freeness, and Greatness of God's pardoning Love and Mercy. They who are elated, and buoyed up, with high Thoughts of themselves, and of their own supposed Deserts, Merits, and Excellencies, may withhold the Tribute of Praise: They who vainly fancy they have less than they deserve, no Wonder if Persons, bloated with such Pride and Self-Conceit, are formal and faint in ascribing Praise to God, because they are not convinced of their Obligations to him.

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Such are very apt to fall into a murmuring and ungrateful Temper, imagining that they are severely treated, or at least have not answerable to their Deserts. This therefore is another proper Method of having and preserving a thankful Disposition of Soul: Be cloathed with Humility; be affected with the Sense of your Sins, Demerits, and Unworthiness; for the more Humility encreases, flowing from just Sentiments of ourselves, the Weakness & Depravity of the Human Nature, as likewise from a right Knowledge of God's infinite Majesty, irresistible Might, unspotted Holiness, and boundless Goodness, to which we are indebted for all the Comforts of this Life, and the most agreeable Hopes & Prospects of a blessed Immortality. I say, Humility, taking its Rise and Original from such just Sentiments of God & of ourselves, will be the Parent of Gratitude to God, and make such Impressions of Devotion and Thankfulness, that we shall be always ready to go with the Multitude to the House of God, and to enter his Gates with Praise. The proper Sense of our own Unworthiness, and of the great Mercy and Goodness of God in sparing our Lives, and giving us the bright Hopes of eternal Life, will make us frequent and fervent in this delightful Exercise and Employment of blessing and praising the God of Love and of

all Grace. This suggests to my Thoughts another Method proper to encrease a grateful Temper of Mind towards God; which is, that we should accustom ourselves frequently, and daily, to bless and praise his holy Name for all his Favours, and to acknowledge his Goodness in all we enjoy, whether of a spiritual or temporal Nature. Every good and perfect Gift cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Changing: And therefore to him our Tribute of Praise should be offer'd frequently, every Day. We should bless God for all the Comforts of this Life. His Goodness & Mercy have followed us from the first Moment of Life to the present. Gratitude to God should be habitual, and deeply fixed in our Minds. We should often have our Minds affected with the Goodness of God to us, in making us Rational Creatures. This original and primary Mercy of God towards us, the Psalmist here mentions as the Ground and Foundation of this sublime and pious Exercise; *Serve the Lord with Gladness, come before his Presence with Singing. Know ye, that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his People, and the Sheep of his Pasture.* So, in another Psalm, *I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy Works, O God!*
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God's continual Care in preserving & guarding us amidst those innumerable Evils and Dangers which surround us, should be every Day thankfully acknowledged. He upholdeth our Souls in Life; his invisible Arm is our constant Support; his Visitations preserve our Spirits. Let us not presume to use the good Creatures of God without a proper Acknowledgment of his Goodness, who, by the Death of other Creatures, preserves us in Life. Remember you are not the absolute Proprietors of those Things which God gives: We are but Stewards, who are accountable to him, who is the Proprietor of all that we enjoy. *I. Tim. iv. 4. Every Creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with Thanksgiving.* All the Distinctions which the Law of MOSES made between Meats Clean & Unclean is now taken away and abolished; and under the Evangelical Dispensation every Creature of God is permitted to be used. But then we must use them with Hearts full of Thanksgiving and Praise; for, as the Apostle expresses himself, the Creatures of God are by him blessed, and sanctified to our Use by Prayer and Thanksgiving. Let us bless God every Day for the Provision he makes for the Supply of all our Wants. Never receive God's good Creatures without an Acknowledgment from whom you receive them, as God must be thus
bless'd

bles's'd and prais'd every Day for these common Favours of his Providence, so more especially we should adore his Name for spiritual Benefits: For our Nativity in a Christian Land, for our Redemption by Christ, for the Ordinances of the Gospel, the Means of Grace; more especially if, by the Divine Blessing, they have been profitable to us in promoting our spiritual Advantage, Welfare, and Happiness. Thus Christians, who are under the strongest and most endearing Bonds to Gratitude, should be frequently and daily testifying their Sense of God's Goodness, and employing themselves in this delightful Duty of adoring and praising God's holy Name; and by the frequent Exercise of our Minds this Way we shall find our Gratitude to God will be habitual.

Having thus offered several Directions for this Purpose, I should now proceed to recommend and enforce this by some Reasons and Arguments. But this shall be the Subject of the following Discourse.



Of Thanksgiving,

Of Thanksgiving, or Gratitude to
God for his Mercy and Goodness.

PSALM C. 4, 5.

*Enter into his Gates with Thank-
giving, and into his Courts with
Praise: Be thankful to him, and
bless his Name; for the Lord is
good, his Mercy is everlasting,
and his Truth endureth to all
Generations.*

IN the foregoing Discourse on these Words
I have shewn, that the Goodness and
Mercy of God is the Foundation and Rea-
son of Thankfulness and Gratitude to him.
Secondly, With what Temper and Disposi-
tion of Mind we should offer our Tribute of
Praise. Thirdly, I have proposed several
Directions for the raising and promoting a
Spirit of Thankfulness to God. I shall now
proceed, in the fourth Place, to prove, by
several

several Reasons and Arguments, that it is a Duty incumbent on all Rational Beings to maintain a constant Sense and Remembrance of God's Favours and Benefits, and to be often exciting all their Powers to bless and adore his holy Name. We should be often meditating on the Reasons and Arguments for this Purpose, otherwise we shall be prone to fall into an ungrateful Disposition of Soul. There is no want of Arguments: The great Danger is, whether Mankind will meditate on them; for there are poor Remains of Gratitude to God in our Natures; and the Generality are apt to be forgetful of God and his Benefits; and good Men themselves, after Mercies received, have not as they ought rendered to the Lord according to the Benefits conferred on them. There is a Necessity therefore that we should be all well acquainted with those Arguments, which prove it to be a Duty incumbent on all to *enter God's Gates with Thanksgiving, and into his Courts with Praise.* To this End these following Arguments should be frequently weigh'd, and maturely considered.

First, That God hath endowed all Rational Creatures with spiritual Powers and Capacities for this exalted Service and Devotion. Why hath he breathed into us the Breath of Life, and given us immortal Souls, but that
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we might live to his Glory, who formed us for his Praise? The Creatures around us represent to all Intelligent Beings and display the adorable Perfections of their great Creator. By the Things which are made we discern, or, if we are in the least Degree attentive to them, we may easily discern, his eternal Power and Godhead. The glorious Perfections of the Deity shine forth illustriously; all Nature proclaims the Being and the Perfections of God. The Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, of God are seen by any who will attend to the Voice of Nature, and therefore by the devout Psalmist a Voice is ascribed to them, *Psa.* xix. 1, 2, 3. Inanimate Creatures cannot utter the Praises of God for want of a rational intelligent Mind, being incapable of discerning the Glory of their Creator. God was pleased therefore to form an Order of Rational Beings, who are obliged to render to him that Tribute of Praise his Works call for. What otherwise can be the Meaning of those Places of Scripture, wherein the inanimate Creatures are called upon to praise and adore the Great Creator. These cannot do it. They are therefore a loud Call and Invitation to all Rational Beings to be much employed in this holy Exercise, for which God hath furnished them with suitable Abilities, and expects that they employ them this Way,

H *Psalm cxlvi.*

Psalms cxlviii. 3, 4, 5. Praise ye him Sun and Moon, praise him all ye Stars of Light, &c.

The very Light of Nature and Reason recommends this Gratitude and Thanksgiving to God; 'tis of a moral and therefore of eternal Force and Obligation. By this very Argument the Psalmist enforces it, *Psa. cxlvii.*

1. Praise ye the Lord, for it is good; sing Praises to our God, for 'tis pleasant, and Praise is comely. 'Tis good, comely, most fit, as all who derive their Being from God, and depend on him, must know. 'Tis a Duty that is incumbent on all, on account of the intrinsic Goodness of it. 'Tis decorous, becoming, and comely, that all depending Creatures should pay their Tribute of Thanksgiving and Praise to their great Creator, Preserver, and constant Benefactor. We ought to reason with ourselves thus: Why hath God made us capable of discerning his glorious Perfections, shining in the Works of his Hands? Surely this is a plain Evidence, that he expects we should celebrate his Praises, and ascribe Glory to Him of whom are all Things. Since therefore we cannot, consistent with Reason, think that these Things came into Being by Chance, or by a fortuitous Concourse of Atoms, we are therefore obliged to acknowledge one first Cause and Principle of all Things; for since there are the most conspicuous Marks of Wisdom, Power,

Power, and Goodness, in the Works of Creation, he who is the Author of them must necessarily have these Perfections to an infinite Degree. Agreeably hereto we read, that the Heathens, having only the Light of Nature and Reason, are said (by the Apostle) to be inexcusable for not improving it as they ought and might have done, so as by the Things which are made to discern and own the eternal Power and Godhead of the great Creator, and also for not glorifying him as God. When God had finished the material World, there was a Creature wanting here below, that was capable of giving him the Glory and Praise that was due from a Rational Being. 'Till Angels and Men were created, what Glory or Praise could the Divine Being have? Angels might resound the Praises of God in Heaven, when the Foundation of the Earth was laid. These Morning Stars, the holy Angels, sang for Joy. But on Earth none were capable of such exalted Service. God therefore said, Let us make Man, a Creature endowed with a rational and immortal Soul, and fitted for this Duty. Praising God was the very End for which Man was form'd. Must it not therefore be good, fit, and comely, to be thus employed? How shall we answer the Design of our Creator, if we live thoughtless of Him who gave us the very Power of
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thinking, and thus prove ungrateful and unthankful? And if this was very sinful and criminal with regard to the Heathens, much more must it be so with reference to those who enjoy the Benefit of Revelation, whereby those Ideas of God, and his Perfections, which were almost erased out of the Minds of Men, are revived. DAVID having said, that it was *God who made us, and not we ourselves; we are his People, and the Sheep of his Pasture*; very strongly and justly infers our Duty, *Enter into his Gates with Thanksgiving, and into his Courts with Praise; for the Lord is good, &c.*

Secondly, Another Reason and Argument to recommend and enforce this Duty, shall be taken from the peculiar Pleasure that attends the proper Exercise thereof. So the Psalmist, in the Place before quoted, *Praise the Lord, for it is good; sing Praises to our God, for it is pleasant.* If the Mind be well disposed, and hath any due Sense of Obligation to God, the Fountain of Being, and of all Blessings, this Testimony of Gratitude will be a very delightful Employment. What Pleasure does it afford to contemplate the infinite Excellencies of the Ever-blessed God, and when we have the most raised Thoughts of him, to adore that Being who is possessed of all Perfections; More especially if we
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have Reason to say, this God is our God, our Father, our chosen Portion, and Happiness! To sing Praises to our God cannot but afford peculiar Pleasure to those who know they have an Interest in him. The Angels of Light, who always behold the Face of our Father who is in Heaven, resound his Praises with the sublimest Pleasure, and adore His Majesty with a profound and delightful Veneration. Must it not be very pleasant to be employed as the Angels around God's Throne are? If Beings of such exalted Understanding do with unwearied Joy and Delight sing Praises to him, should not we raise all the Powers of our Souls, and join those blessed Spirits in singing Praises to their and our God? Since this is the Work and Employment of Heaven, let us begin it on Earth, that we may be fitted for that World of perfect Devotion and Worship. The more sensible we are of our Meanness, and God's infinite Greatness and Majesty, the more Pleasure we shall perceive in praising him. The more God is known, the more he will be revered and adored. If there are any who find no Pleasure or Delight herein, 'tis owing to themselves, that they do not contemplate the Perfections of the Deity, or that they content themselves with some verbal and formal Acts of Devotion; or they have great Doubts
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whether he be their God, or they have any special Relation to him as their Father in Christ. If there be any just Reason to question this, 'tis no Wonder if they are faint, languid, and negligent herein. They cannot say that 'tis pleasant to them to sing his Praises, because they cannot say that he is their chosen Portion & Happiness. A Doubt of this Nature will sink and depress their Minds, and hinder their Joy in him. But as for those who can say this God is our God, what unspeakable Pleasure must they have in singing his Praises! The Thoughts of his Majesty, Greatness, and Power, is no way terrifying to their Minds, but rather delightful; for they know that he is able to do for them above all they can ask or think; and, being infinitely Good, he is inclined to do so. The Psalmist's Words are very weighty and emphatical, *Sing Praises to our God, for it is pleasant.* They who have good Reason to say this God is our God, will always find a peculiar Pleasure in adoring him, and in celebrating the Praises of his Greatness and Goodness. Such may say, with the greatest Joy, this God is our God, and will be so for ever and ever. This devout Exercise, and sublime Employment, anticipates the Joys of the Blessed, exhilarates the Mind, gives a Foretaste of Heaven, and prepares for the Society of Angels and perfected Spirits.

rits. Let the Servants of God accustom themselves more to this holy Exercise, and if they have Minds well disposed, and have experienced the refined and exalted Pleasure attending this Duty, they will not want Arguments to persuade them to *enter God's Gates with Thanksgiving*, or *his Courts with Praise*: They will rejoice to go with the Multitude to keep Holy-Day; and the greater the Multitude is, the more is their Joy increased.

Thirdly, Another Reason and Argument that should move all to comply with this Advice and Exhortation in the Text, is taken from the Acceptableness of this Duty and Service to God. This is what is frequently enjoined in the Word of God. How often is this recommended in the Book of Psalms! He must be a great Stranger to Religion, and to the Word of God, who has not observed this. I shall direct you to two or three Places in the New Testament: *Eph. v. 4. But rather giving of Thanks*. Instead of using any impertinent, obscene, or foolish Discourse, let the Servants of God be employing themselves in commemorating the Goodness of God towards them, in talking of the Divine Benefits conferred on them, and exciting themselves and others to adore and give Thanks to God. This is a Duty becoming Saints, that is, the true Servants
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of God, who are devoted to him, and upon whose Hearts Holiness to the Lord is written. This is plainly the Meaning of the Apostle, if his Words are compared with the former Part of the Verse. So in *I. Thes. v. 18.* *In every thing give Thanks; for this is the Will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.* The Meaning is this: In every Condition of Life be not only contented, but thankful; bless God for all his Mercies, general and special; for past and present Favours, for spiritual and temporal Blessings; bless God not only in Prosperity but in Adversity; for this latter is order'd by God for the Good and Welfare of his Creatures, tho' we may not presently see how it can work out any Good for us. *Heb. xiii. 15.* *By him therefore let us offer the Sacrifice of Praise to God continually, that is, the Fruit of our Lips, giving Thanks to his Name.* As this Duty is frequently enjoined in the Word of God, so it is highly grateful and acceptable to God. *Psa. xxxiii. 1.* *Rejoice in the Lord, O ye Righteous; for Praise is comely for the Upright.* How acceptable this is to God we may learn, by consulting *Psa. l. 14, 15.* *Offer to God Thanksgiving, and pay thy Vows to the Most High. Call upon me in the Day of Trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.* The Design of the Psalm is to reprove the common Miscarriages and Errors of many Professors of Religion,

ligion, who may fancy they please God merely by external Services, though they are negligent of the important Duties of internal Piety and Devotion towards God, or of Justice and Charity to others. And 'tis still to be feared that there are many who imagine that if they abound in external Duties, that this will compensate for the Want of unfeigned Love to God, and of Justice and Charity towards their Fellow Creatures. The Great God is represented as coming to Judgment, and summoning his People who gloried in their Relation to him. Thus it begins: *The Mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the Earth from the rising of the Sun to the going down thereof; out of Sion, the Perfection of Beauty, God hath shined; our God shall come, and shall not keep Silence; a Fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him; he shall call to the Heavens from above, and to the Earth, that he may judge his People. Gather my Saints together to me, those who have made a Covenant with me by Sacrifice.* The Divine Order runs thus: Let those who by Profession are my People, who have passed under the Denomination of Saints, be summoned to appear before my Tribunal. He first informs them, that he had no Charge against them for any Deficiency in external Rites of Worship; they had been careful to multiply these, hoping this would
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supply the Want of real Piety, Justice, Mercy, and Charity. He next acquaints them what it was he required of all his Worshippers, what he would accept, and would be most grateful to him; *Offer to God Thanksgiving, &c.* Let your Hearts be deeply affected with a Sense of my Mercy & Goodness towards you. Whoever does this in a right Manner, God is pleased to call this our *glorifying him*; and the Sincerity of this Devotion and Gratitude of Soul must be manifested by a regular well ordered *Conversation*: To *such* God promises to shew his Salvation, in the last Verse of the Psalm: *I will* (says the holy Psalmist) *praise the Name of God with a Song, and will magnify him with Thanksgiving; this also shall please the Lord better than an Ox or Bullock*; that is, than all ritual Ordinances, which are of no Value in themselves without a grateful Temper and Disposition of Soul, *Psa. lxxix. 30, 31.* This suggests another Argument and Reason for the Exercise of a private and publick *Thanksgiving* to God, taken from the excellent Examples of this recorded in the Word of God, which are worthy of our Imitation. Here the Royal Prophet, the sweet Singer of *Israel*, ought to be regarded as a very worthy Pattern of this Devotion. As he gave himself to *Prayer*, so, on every proper Occasion, we find him employing his Heart and Pen in celebrating

brating the *Praises* of his great Deliverer, the Rock of his Salvation. Whenever he was favoured by a kind and gracious Providence with any remarkable Deliverance, he immediately, while the Sense of the Divine Goodness was warm in his Mind, composes some lofty Hymn of Praise. The Book of Psalms confirms this. Of those numerous Passages to this Purpose, which might be quoted, I shall direct you but to one, where you see what Resolution he formed. *Psalm xxxiv. 1, 2. I will bless the Lord at all Times, his Praise shall continually be in my Mouth; my Soul shall make her Boast in the Lord; the Humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.* He endeavours to raise the same Spirit in others; *O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his Name together.* They whose Circumstances in Life are easy, and plentiful, should not be forgetful of God their Benefactor; but the more they receive from him, the more should their Hearts be raised in his Praises: Neither should those whose Circumstances are low and narrow refrain from this Duty. *JOB*, when bereaved of his Substance and Children, continues blessing God: For a Man who has forfeited Life must not complain or murmur against God, but be thankful that Life is spared: Shall a living Man complain? *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name*

of the Lord. In every State of Life, however afflictive or calamitous, a Soul that hath a due Sense of the Evil of Sin, and of the Goodness of God, will find some Matter for adoring and praising his holy Name. DANIEL, in the Land of Captivity, where he was watched most narrowly by his envious Foes, who sought his Destruction, would not be diverted from his stated Practice of praying to and of praising his God, though he knew that he exposed himself hereby to the Wrath of Enemies, and to their pernicious Scheme for his Ruin; but, trusting in God, he persisted in his Duty, and would not abate even the opening of his Window towards JERUSALEM. *Dan. vi. 10.* Now when Daniel knew that the Writing was signed, he went into his House, and his Windows being open in his Chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his Knees three times a Day, and prayed, and gave Thanks before his God, as he afore-time did. Thus PAUL and SILAS sang Praise to God in the Prison, and that too even at Midnight, *Acts xvi. 25.* Thus you see that this Duty of Thanksgiving and Praise is recommended by very worthy Examples, and Patterns of this Devotion.

Fifthly, Remember that Ingratitude to God for his Mercies is very sinful and criminal, and highly displeasing to God. There
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is scarce any thing that Mankind have a keener Resentment of than when they meet with ungrateful Returns from those upon whom they have lain Obligations to Acts of Kindness, and Offices of Love. This shews that they are of a very abject degenerate Temper; and an universal Odium & Mark of Infamy is by common Consent fixed on the Man who is so destitute of Humanity as to abuse, to injure in Word or Deed, a generous Benefactor; and do all agree to look on such as the worst of Men, and Persons of an infamous Character, who are capable of vile Ingratitude. Why should any have slighter Thoughts of Ingratitude towards God, the Fountain of all our Blessings? How unmindful are we of *the Rock of our Salvation*, how prone to forget our *Creator*, and most gracious *Benefactor*! After a signal Mercy granted, or Deliverance wrought out, the Heart may for a short Time be affected with the Goodness of God; but how soon is the Impression worn off, and we are prone to return to our former Oblivion, Forgetfulness, and Ingratitude! How justly do they forfeit the Divine Favours who prove so ungrateful! You may see how God resents this Temper, by his Treatment of the *Israelites*, to whom he had shewn peculiar and very distinguishing Favours. Though he had often miraculously provided for them, and supplied

supplied their Wants, no sooner did they meet with any new Difficulty but they forgot the Works of the Lord, his former Acts of Lovingkindness and Power, murmured against him, would revolt and backslide from him. Instead of commemorating his Mercies, and trusting in him, of whose Goodness and Power they had constant Experience: Yet, after all such a long Series of Miracles wrought for them, no sooner did any new Scene of Difficulty appear, but, as if they had never any Experience of God's Mercy and Power, they would immediately betray a murmuring, unthankful, and discontented Spirit. You may observe, by reading this Part of Sacred History, how displeasing this Temper and Conduct in them towards God was; witness the severe, but righteous, Treatment they met with. See how offensive this is to Almighty God, by consulting *Isaiah*, i. 2, 3. *Hear, O Heavens, and give Ear O Earth, for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up Children, and they have rebelled against me: The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib; the most stupid brute Creatures in their Way acknowledge, and bow to, their Owners and Benefactors, as Experience shews; But Israel doth not know, my People doth not consider; Israel is insensible of my peculiar Favours. How justly may God de-*
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prive us of all our Comforts in Life, if we disown him by our Ingratitude? But, on the other hand, if we are thankful for the Blessings of Providence and Grace, and are careful to return our Tribute of Praise for Mercies received, this is the Way to have them continued and increased.

I shall only add to this another Motive to *Enter God's Gates with Thanksgiving, and his Courts with Praise.* The more we accustom ourselves to this sublime Devotion, the better fitted and prepared we shall be for adoring and praising God; which is the Work, and everlasting Employment, of blessed Spirits above. Can they be qualified and disposed for such an exalted Service, who were never any way acquainted with it on Earth? The Soul that has been deeply affected with the Mercies of God, and well acquainted with the refined Pleasures which attend this elevated Service, who hath delighted itself in the Almighty, and had the reviving Sense of his Favour, and peculiar Regard; who hath often wished for an Heart to praise God better; this is the Soul that is attempered to and fitted for the delightful Exercise and Employment of glorious Angels and perfected Spirits, and may joyfully, and on good Grounds, expect shortly to be admitted to the Society of innumerable Angels, and
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the Spirits of the Just made perfect. They who delight to *enter into God's Gates*, and to join with the *Church Militant in Thanksgiving and Praise*, shall shortly be added to the *Church Triumphant* in Heaven.

Thus I have represented to you what Obligations we are under to render our just Tribute of Glory and Praise to God. What remains is to make some Inferences from the Whole.

1. This reproves those who are forgetful of God's Benefits, and so, from Day to Day, live negligent of this Duty. 'Tis owing to Mens Forgetfulness of the Divine Favours that they slide gradually into an habitual Ingratitude. They consider not that Hand of Bounty which supplies all their Wants, Hence they live unmindful of the God who made them, and forget the Rock of their Salvation, and forsake the Fountain of living Waters. May all such stupid Sinners be sensible of, and humble for, their past Ingratitude. There is no Want of *Matter* for praising God: The only Thing that is wanting is *an Heart* to dispose for this Duty. Let all such apply to the Father of Lights, from whom every good and perfect Gift cometh, that he would give them an Heart, or Disposition of Mind, that shall incline them to love, worship, and adore him, who is the glorious

glorious Author of their Beings, and of all their Blessings.

2. This Doctrine reproves all those likewise who content themselves with some faint *verbal* Praises, though they *live* to the *Dishonour* of God's Name, and to the Discredit of Religion. Though they *enter God's Courts*, and with their *Lips* pretend to honour God, yet, soon after such a *Shew* of *external* Devotion, profane and blaspheme the Name of God by their execrable Oaths; or, whilst they praise God for the *Gifts* of his Providence, waste and consume them in *Luxury* and sinful Pleasures. They who offer Praise to God, and with great seeming Devotion enter his Courts to celebrate his Praises, whilst they are criminally defective in a *real* Principle of *internal* Piety towards God, and in Acts of *Justice*, *Mercy*, and *Charity* to others, do but *dissemble* with an Omniscient Deity, and are guilty of the vilest Hypocrisy and Dissimulation.

3. We may hence learn in what true Religion does consist. They who are of a Pharasaical Temper, and vain-glorious Disposition, may make a great *Shew* and *Ostentation* of Piety and Devotion; may go on in a constant Circle of *external* Duties, when all the while the *Heart* may be unaffected with the Goodness of God, or with any pro-

per Sense of Obligation to him. *Religion* consists in having a becoming Veneration, Reverence, and Love, of God, fixed in the *Mind*, in *Purity of Heart*, in Gratitude to God for all his Mercies; and, in Consequence of this *internal Principle*, in ordering the *whole Conversation* by the Laws of *right Reason* and *Religion*. They who have this *real* and *vital Principle* of Holiness will delight in God, and *every Day* pay their Tribute of Thanksgiving to him for *all* his Mercies. They endeavour to make God's Praise to be celebrated by others, for this End and Purpose, that their own Minds may be more impressed with the Goodness of God. They embrace readily every Opportunity of entering his Gates, and by their reverent Behaviour in Divine Worship, shew what a Regard they have to the Great Object of their Adoration; and thus endeavour to raise and promote the like Spirit of Devotion in others. You see, by this, how vastly different *true Religion*, in the *Power* of it, is from a *Form* and *specious Shew* thereof. May God grant that we may be more and more acquainted with the *Life* and *Power* of Religion; that we may see the *Beauties of Holiness*, that we may praise God with all our *Hearts*, answerably to his Greatness & Goodness. Let us learn hence the Nature of *true Religion*, and not rest in the *speculative Notion*,

on, but see that we are *really possessed* of it; that we may experience and savour the Joys and Pleasures which flow from it. They who are in Want, or in any Distress and Calamity, the Law of Self-preservation directs them to seek and pray to God for a Supply of their Wants, and for the Removal of what is grievous and burthensome to Nature: But to praise God after the Mercy is received shews and discovers a grateful Acknowledgment of God, and his Goodness, which is very acceptable to him. The Generality of the World, after they have obtained what they desired, are apt to forget God, and make very poor, if any, Returns of Thanksgiving to him. There is need to call upon all, even good Men, to give themselves more to this Duty, because there is a Proneness in us to be forgetful of our Almighty Friend, and most gracious Benefactor. Of the *ten* Persons who were cleansed, but *one* returned to *give Glory to God*; and of that good King HEZEKIAH 'tis remarked, that he rendered not to the Lord according to the Benefit received; see *Luke* xvii. 18. *II. Chron.* xxxii. 25. Though he had been delivered from that Sentence of Death that was by the Prophet, in the Name of God, declared to him, and a Miracle was wrought to assure him of this Favour; yet we see, by this Charge brought against him, what great

Need there is that all, even good Men, should be very watchful of their Hearts, that they may not be forgetful of God, and ungrateful for Benefits received. Let those who may have been in eminent Danger of Death, and who have been mercifully delivered from their Fears, be careful to pay their Tribute of Praise to God their Saviour; and let the Life God hath spared be, with renewed Zeal, consecrated to his Service; which is the best Testimony of sincere Gratitude. Let the *Day of the Lord*, wherein you have the Privilege and Honour of *Entering God's Gates with Thanksgiving*, as 'tis a Day sacred to GOD, be spent in blessing & magnifying his holy Name. Bless God more especially for the invaluable Benefit of Redemption by Jesus Christ, and for the Means of Grace; especially if you have found the Word of God beneficial to your Souls; if it has been the Means, by the Divine Blessing, of moral & spiritual Improvement in Knowledge, Faith, and Joy in God, and so to inspire your Souls with brighter Hopes of that better World, where your Knowledge of God, Love to and Delight in him, will be consummate and perfect; and this your Happiness in knowing, loving, worshipping, and praising God shall know no End, *for in God's Presence is Fulness of Joy, at his Right Hand are Pleasures for evermore.*

Of Thinking

Of Thinking on our Ways.

TWO SERMONS.

PSALM cxix. 59.

I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet unto thy Testimonies.

THE Arguments which are made use of in the Word of God to move to Repentance, and promote a Religious Life, are very weighty and powerful. 'Tis scarce to be conceived how any Rational Person can meditate on them (supposing that he believes the Divine Authority of the Sacred Scriptures) without manifesting some good Effect of such Meditation in his Life and Practice. The two great Springs and Principles of Action are *Hope* and *Fear*: The Hope of obtaining some valuable Good, or the Fear of some impending Evil. And according to the Apprehensions we have of the Greatness and Worth of that Good which is the Object of our Hope, so we shall use answerable

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fwerable Endeavours to acquire it; and according to the Nature of the Evil which is dreaded, so Mankind are apt to use a proportional Care to guard against and avoid it. And to do so is, no doubt, a prudential Way of acting. God, having given us Reasonable Natures, which are influenced and swayed by *Hope* and *Fear*, hath in his Word proposed such Arguments for a virtuous Choice and Behaviour, as cannot fail of Success, if they are believed to come from God, and are seriously weighed. What will move our Hopes, if the *Promise of eternal Life* will not? What can move our Fears, if the awful *Threatenings of future Miseries* will not? God addressees to us, in his Word, as to Rational Beings, and requires that all do exercise those Powers of Reason, Consideration, and Self-reflection, which he hath given, and that we do not suffer ourselves to be led away by present sensible Appearances of Things, without any Thought of what will be the Consequence of our Choice and Actions. How can it be expected, that the most momentous Arguments which are proposed in the Word of God should have any good Influence upon the Hearts and Lives of Men, if they will not afford themselves any Time to *meditate* on them, or only in a transient and superficial Manner think on them? Why is it that many will chuse the
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the *Ways* of Sin but because they will not consider the *Wages* of it, which is *Death eternal*? Vast Multitudes refuse to walk according to God's Laws and Testimonies, or to guide and govern their Actions by them; and the Reason is, because they will not *think of their Ways*, but will follow the Devices of their own Hearts, or the corrupt Examples of others.

The Psalmist in these Words shews us what was the happy Fruit of thinking on his Ways: *I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet unto thy Testimonies.* The Proposition containing the Sense of the Words is this, That serious *Thoughtfulness*, and *Consideration* of our *Ways*, is the first necessary Step to *Conversion* and *Reformation*. In discoursing on them I shall observe the following Order and Method: ---

I. *Shew in what Manner we should think of our Ways.*

II. *Why we should think on them.*

III. *The happy Fruit and Consequences of doing this, which, by the Blessing of God, will attend it.*

IV. *Make some practical Inferences.*

I. I shall

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I. I shall shew in what *Manner* we should *think on our Ways*. This must be done,
1. Impartially and strictly. 2. We must compare them with the Rule of right Reason, and the Word of God. 3. Frequently.
4. With an exact Care to know the Tendency and Consequence of them, and with a Resolution of quitting and forsaking every Evil Way.

1. Mankind should think on their Ways with *Impartiality* and *Strictness*. Self-Love, and Fondness for some evil Courses, will, without Care, make us partial in reflecting on our Actions. Where there is the Love of any evil Actions maintained in the Mind, it will cause such a Person to invent many Excuses, to enter an Apology for them. He will either banish all Thought of what he has done, or content himself with some few partial Thoughts, such as shall not give much Uneasiness. Men may in a general Way *acknowledge themselves to be Sinners*; and, if they implore God's *pardoning Mercy*, they vainly fancy they have done enough, though they never have such serious Thoughts as to *turn from their evil Ways*. He who would think on his Ways to any good Purpose must retire from all the vain Amusements of the World, and bid adieu to all other Subjects for a while, that he may know what is the
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the true and real State and Condition of his Soul. There must be an unbiaſſed impartial Search and Scrutiny made into the paſt Life and Actions. Never put a better Conſtruction on them than they will bear; rather aggravate any bad Actions of your own, than diminish their evil Nature: For this Method will quicken our Diligence in avoiding Sin for the future, awaken our Care and Caution, encrease Sorrow and deep Repentance. If any ſhould pretend to ſet apart ſome Time for this important Duty, and yet, through Fondneſs for any evil Actions, ſhould *deceive themſelves*, this would be the Way of continuing ignorant of the true State of their Souls, and of flattering themſelves with ſuch deluſive Hopes, as will prove of ruinous and pernicious Conſequence. For if a Man think himſelf to be ſomething, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himſelf. Such a deceitful Method will keep a Man ignorant of the Evil of Sin, leſſen his Sorrow for it, ſuppreſs all Endeavours for a Reformation, and buoy him up with ſuch a falſe Hope as will terminate in a moſt wretched and miſerable Confuſion and Diſappointment. Whenever therefore we apply our Minds to this Duty, we muſt impartially examine our Ways, ſee that we lay aſide all Prejudice in favour of any beloved evil Courſes; for if there be the Love of any Sin knowingly retained,

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tained, this will either prevent all Thoughtfulness of our Actions, or throw such a Bias on our Minds, that we shall bring in a wrong Verdict. Such will hide the Guilt of Sin from themselves as much as they can, and extenuate the evil Nature of it. They will deceitfully colour over such Actions as before the Bar of right Reason will appear to be unjustifiable and unwarrantable. This Method, instead of awakening the Sinner to a sincere and deep Repentance, will rather harden him in Impenitence. There must be a strict Care used. Let none please and content themselves with a general and superficial Glance, but be very exact and particular in this Scrutiny and Examination. When the Psalmist says that he *thought on his Ways*, he means a *particular and close Application of his Mind to this Subject*. He considered himself in the Presence of God, who searcheth all Hearts, and who was acquainted with all his Ways and Actions, even such of them as might be hid from the View and Observation of all Mortals. In the 139th Psalm he gives a very beautiful and striking Description of God's Omniscience and Omnipresence, and finishes his sublime Discourse on these incommunicable Attributes of the Deity with this devout Address, Ver. 23, 24. *Search me, O God, and know my Heart; try me, and know my Thoughts; and see if there be any wicked*
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Way in me, and lead me in the Way everlasting. This is the first Thing to be observed, and practised; when we *think of our Ways*, it must be with *Impartiality* and *Strictness*, in Opposition to that biased, partial, and loose Manner with which many ('tis to be feared) content themselves; whereby they form a wrong and deceitful Judgment of their Actions, and are betrayed into a fatal Self-Deceit.

2. When we think of our Ways, we must compare them with the Rule of right Reason, and of the Word of God. By this Standard all our Words and Actions must be tried; by this Touchstone they must be examined. This will be the Rule of Judgment at the Last Day. God hath planted a CONSCIENCE in every Man, to be a *private Monitor* and *Judge*. There is a *Law written in the Heart*, such a Witness as will *either excuse and acquit, or accuse and condemn*, every Man that will give the least Attention to its Evidence, according to the Nature and Quality of his Actions, whether good or evil. However careless sensual Sinners may endeavour to evade the Upbraidings of *their own guilty Minds*, there are certain Seasons when they *cannot* do it. When CONSCIENCE is awakened, either by some awful Discourse, or by a sudden Stroke of Providence, it will make the stoutest and most harden-

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ed Sinner to tremble, because it presages future direful Vengeance. The only Way of gaining a rational Peace, and a settled Tranquility of Soul, is to bring all our Actions, as far as we can call them to Remembrance, to the Standard of *right Reason*, and *the Word of God*; and whatever will not bear Examination *now*, will not in the great *Day of Judgment*. 'Tis not sufficient to plead that our Ways and Actions are not *so bad* as those of many others; for tho' this should be true, it will not be an available Plea, as may appear by this plain Similitude: — Suppose a Malefactor, arraigned at the Bar of Justice, should offer such a Defence for himself, 'that there were others guilty of greater Crimes,' will this be allowed to be a valid Vindication, to procure an entire Discharge? The great Question is, whether our Actions are *justifiable* by the *Rule of Reason*, and *the Word of God*. Supposing that you have not contracted an *equal Degree of Guilt* with *others*, this only proves that you are not liable to as *great Measure* of Punishment with *others*. When *WE think on our Ways*, we are not to have a Regard to the Actions of *OTHERS*, but to confine our Meditation and Examination to *OUR OWN*. *I thought on MY Ways*. He did not critically search after the Blemishes there might be discovered in *others*, but looked narrowly and carefully to *himself*. We

are to compare our Hearts and Ways with the Word of God, which will be the Rule of Judgment in *that Day when the Secrets of all Hearts will be disclosed, and the hidden Things of Darkness will be brought to Light.* Think not that because an Evil Action was committed for a long Time past, and concealed from the Eye and Knowledge of Fellow Mortals, that you are therefore secure from a Sentence of Condemnation. Nothing but sincere Repentance can procure Pardon and Life. 'Tis not *Length of Time* that obliterates or erases the Guilt and Pollution of Sin. Let us *think of our Ways*, and be as strict as we can in the Examination of *ourselves* by the Word of God; and thus we may anticipate the future Judgment, and provide for it; and, by regulating our Hearts and Lives by the Word of God, may have a joyful and comfortable Prospect of the great Day of the Lord. We ought so to judge ourselves *now*, that *when we shall be judged* we may not be condemned by the Lord the Supreme Judge.

3. Mankind should *think on their Ways* FREQUENTLY. This is a good Method of keeping our spiritual Accounts ready, and free from Intricacy, and perplexing Doubts. They who *seldom* think on their Ways are in great Danger of being ignorant of the true State

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State of their Souls, or at least of involving themselves in a Cloud of Doubts and Fears. 'Tis very useful and beneficial *frequently* to call ourselves to an Account; for thus any Swervings or Deviations from God's Precepts will be speedily recollected, and revived in our Memories. Such *frequent Thoughtfulness* will hasten, and not suffer us to delay our Repentance, and probably will guard from future Follies and Iniquities: Whereas he who lives on in a *thoughtless* State, seldom examining his Life and Conduct, rarely inspecting into the Nature and Quality of his past Actions, is liable to fall a Prey to Satan's Temptations. He who is sedate and considerate in reflecting on any past Errors, and frequently employed this Way, will preserve and promote a lively Sense of the Difference between Good and Evil, and takes the most effectual Method of lessening the Number of Errors in future Life. The Man who is cautious of acting, till he knows whether he shall please or displease God; such *Consideration*, and *stated Watchfulness*, will preserve from many Temptations; or, if not preserve from them, it will, by Divine Assistance, render us victorious over them. Most of the Follies and Sins into which Men fall is owing to their *Inadvertance* and *Inconsideration*. May not some say, ' Had we been ' more *attentive* and *watchful*, we should not ' have

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‘ have been ensnared by such a Stratagem
‘ of the Enemy.’ Another, ‘ Had I been
‘ more frequently employed in thinking on
‘ my Ways, I should not have lain so long
‘ under the Guilt of Sin, but should have
‘ been moved to a more speedy Humilia-
‘ tion, and Contrition of Soul, for past Er-
‘ rors.’ Let it be noted, that ’tis no suffi-
cient Excuse to say, that you were drawn
into Sin in a *thoughtless unguarded Moment*.
Does it become those whom God hath en-
dowed with Rational Powers to say, we did
not *think* as we *ought*? ’Tis no valid Ex-
cuse to plead, that we were surpris’d by the
Devices of the Enemy of Souls, or over-
borne and vanquish’d by the Allurements
of the Flesh, or the Enticements of bad
Examples : For ’tis our Duty and Wisdom
to be *watchful*, and to pray that we may not
enter into Temptation. We should fre-
quently think on our Ways, that we may
rectify any Errors in past Life, and guard
against them for the future. He who walks
thus *circumspectly* and *cautiously* walks *wisely*.

4. Mankind should *think on their Ways*,
and be resolv’d to *reform*, and to *renounce*
and *forsake* every evil Way. Calmly confi-
der the Nature and Quality of your Acti-
ons, whether virtuous or vicious. Meditate
on the Consequence of them, however plea-
sing

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sing or flattering the Ways of Sin may be ; however grateful to corrupt Nature, remember that *the End of them is Death.* Proverbs xiv. 12. *There is a Way which seemeth right to a Man, but the End thereof are the Ways of Death.* There are some Courses of Iniquity which may carry some plausible Appearance of being right, and justifiable ; such an Error and Mistake may be owing to Ignorance, or to Self-love and Flattery ; to a partial and biased Turn of Mind, or to the Delusions of Satan ; which they are subject to, who have no Love to the Truth, but have Pleasure in Unrighteousness. If there are any, who, for such Reasons, have mistaken, and vainly deluded themselves with the Notion that their Ways are right, let such earnestly beg of God that their Minds may be enlightened, & their fatal Errors may be rectified. Because that Sentence is so very weighty and momentous, we have it repeated, *Prov. xvi. 25.* The Design of SOLOMON was, no doubt, to prevent or correct that dangerous Self-deceit which is so common. If Men would impartially consider their Ways (though they may at present seem to be right in their own Eyes) they would by the Light of God's Word be undeceived, and see that the End of them, unless they turn from them, are *the Ways of Death, Prov. xxi. 2.* We have the same repeated,

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peated, together with a very good Reason added, to make all Persons considerate, and sincere in examining themselves and their Actions; *Every Way of Man is right in his own Eyes, but the Lord pondereth the Heart.* And since he searcheth the Heart, and hath Pleasure in Uprightness, and requires Truth in the inward Parts, is perfectly acquainted with all the Springs and Principles of our Actions, this should make us careful that we do not, by any wrong Biass of Judgment, please ourselves in any Courses which are forbidden, and condemned, in his Word. Let none, through Partiality or Self-flattery, deceive themselves, thinking those Ways to be right which will surely have a fatal and pernicious Issue. Think on that great and awful Day of Judgment, when God, who *pondereth our Hearts*, will render to every Man according to his Works, whether they have been good or evil.

Thus I have shewn in what Manner, and with what Disposition of Soul, all are obliged to *think on their Ways*: — impartially and strictly; — comparing them with the Rule of right Reason and the Word of God; — frequently, with a Resolution of knowing the Nature and Quality of them, and of reforming whatever Part of our Conduct has been irregular; --- with great Sedateness

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dateness of Thought, being cautious that we do not deceive ourselves with a vain Imagination of the Goodness of our State, and the Rectitude of our Actions. Think of your Ways with a Regard to the future Judgment, when a strict Scrutiny will be made into the Nature and Quality of them, together with the Aims and Intentions by which you are swayed and guided. Then all false Colours which have been put on bad Actions will be discovered, and it will appear, that those Ways which many are apt to think to be right, will terminate in eternal Death.

I proceed, in the Second Place,

II. To propose some Reasons and Arguments to move all *thus to think on their Ways.*

I. God hath given us Rational Powers for this Purpose. 'Tis by these we are superior to the BRUTES. They are led on by Instinct, and by the Force of Objects striking on their Senses: But MANKIND have the Power of Thought, and Self-reflection. Why have we this excellent Power, but that we should make use of it? They who live wholly by a regard to sensible Objects, and follow their Appetites and vicious Inclinations, without observing the Dictates

Dictates of Reason and Conscience, do *live like the Beasts that perish*. They degrade and debase their Reason, which is the Glory of the Human Nature, and suffer those Appetites and Passions to reign over them, which Reason was given to regulate, guide, and govern; and thus place themselves on a Level with the BRUTES, who, according to their Natures, are swayed and guided by the Impressions which external Objects make on their Senses. They are incapable of discerning the Difference between Good and Evil; and consequently can have no painful uneasy Reflections, and at Death (there is a Probability) they are utterly extinguished and annihilated. But MAN hath a *Rational* and *Immortal Soul* breathed into him by the FATHER OF SPIRITS. The Inspiration of the Almighty hath given him *Understanding*. He hath a *Consciousness* of the Difference between Good and Evil; so that after a virtuous and good Action he is pleased with himself, has an agreeable and comfortable Review. The *good Man* is satisfied from *himself*; his Mind applauds and approves of his Conduct. On the other hand, if a Person has done any thing which is contrary to *right Reason*, how uneasy is he whenever he comes to make any calm Reflection? *Conscience*, if he will listen to its Warnings and Admonitions, will upbraid, accuse, and condemn

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his Conduct; for *there is no Peace to the Wicked*; he is, like the troubled Sea, agitated, and tossed to and fro, by his own irregular tumultuous Passions. Must not all immediately see the Force and Weight of this Reason and Argument to move them to comply with this Duty? 'Tis an Argument taken from the Design of the Almighty in our *Formation*, having endowed us with such *Capacities* for *this very End and Purpose*, and planted such a *moral Sense* of the Difference between Actions, virtuous and vicious, which cannot be wholly obliterated, or blotted out. They, therefore, who do not employ their Minds in contemplating the Blessed God, and their Obligations to him, are guilty of forgetting him who gave them the Power of Thinking. MAN hath a *Rational Soul*; and we may hence derive a good Argument to prove that we are *designed* for *Immortality*: For since we are made *Reasonable Beings*, does not this teach us that God will expect we behave *as such*, and will call us to an Account for our Behaviour? Why have Men, after the Commission of evil Actions, an *Uneasiness of Mind*? Is not this a *natural Presage* of a *future Judgment*? If we were never to give any Account for our Actions, why should there be such *Terrors of a guilty Mind*? They who are in the highest Station in Life, who have had no Reason to dread any Punishments

nishments from *others*, their Condition being such as hath placed them above all Fears, have yet been as liable to the *Remorse* and *Accusations* of *Conscience* as the meanest of Mortals; witness BELSHAZZER, FELIX, and others. But besides these natural and probable Arguments for the IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL, and for a FUTURE JUDGMENT, we have the Benefit of a Divine Revelation, whereby we are assured that *our Souls* are *immortal*, and shall *exist for ever*, either in Happiness or Misery, according to the Nature and Quality of our present Choice, and Actions. Let any Person ask himself this Question, 'Why hath God furnished my Nature with such distinguishing and excellent Powers and Faculties of Reason, Conscience, Self-reflection, Freedom of Choice, and an indelible Impression of the Difference of Actions good and bad? Was it not his Design that we should make a good Use and Improvement of these natural Privileges? And what better Use can we make of them, than so to think on our Ways, and regulate them by his Word, that we may be acceptable to him?'

2. Another Reason and Argument that should prevail on all to think on their Ways may be taken from God's positive Injunction
and

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and Command. This important Duty is enjoined twice in three Verses. See the Second Chapter of HAGGAI, Verse the 5th, *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your Ways*; which is repeated in the 7th Verse. All those whom God hath made capable of this Duty are enjoined by the highest Authority to perform it. Let none live in a thoughtless inconsiderate Manner, without observing the Nature of the Actions they have done, or what will be the Consequence of them. Such act contrary to the Design of the Almighty, in giving them such excellent Powers and Abilities, and also condemn the Authority of the Lord of Hosts, who enjoins all who are capable to *consider their Ways*. We should seriously and frequently examine ourselves and Actions with reference to God our Maker, to others, and to ourselves. Every individual Person ought to put such a Question to himself, ‘ Have I
‘ devoted my Heart and best Affections to
‘ God; and do I live by the Rules of Piety,
‘ and express the Reverence and Veneration
‘ I have of him, by ordering my Actions
‘ and whole Conversation by his Word?
‘ Does the Authority of God sway above all
‘ other Considerations?’ Thus Reasonable Creatures, as soon as they become capable of *thinking on their Ways*, should be very observant of their Behaviour towards God their Maker.

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Maker: And, with regard to others, there should be a strict Enquiry, whether we have been guided by the Laws of *Justice* and *Charity*, and *done by others as we would be willing, in like Circumstances, to be treated.* Whoever would examine their Actions, if they have in any respect violated the great FUNDAMENTAL LAW OF JUSTICE, must be sensible of the Guilt which adheres to all such Acts of INJUSTICE. They who have been unjust, unmerciful, uncharitable, and censorious, could never approve of their past Ways, but must be filled with Shame and Confusion. So, with regard to *ourselves*, we should enquire whether we have lived by the Laws of Temperance, Sobriety, and Self-denial, or in what Instances these may have been broken. These are the THREE GREAT IMPORTANT BRANCHES OF DUTY which should be the Subject of Enquiry, when we apply ourselves to think on our Ways; *God hath shewn us what is good, and what he requires of us, That we do justly, love Mercy, and walk humbly with him.* And the Apostle plainly informs us what 'tis the *Grace of God* teacheth, that is, *To deny Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts; to live soberly, righteously, and godly.* You see by this of what extensive Nature this Duty is which is recommended by the Authority of the Most High. They, therefore, who have lived in the Neglect

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glect of this Duty ought to retire, and *consider their Ways*, because God so solemnly requires this, and will avenge the Contempt of his Authority.

3. Mankind should think on their Ways, because by these we shall be judged at the Last Day. The eternal States of all will be decided according to their *Actions*: And can there be a more weighty Reason given than this? The great Enquiry hereafter will be, What have been our Ways, and Actions? --- Will this be the Rule of Judgment; will this be the Subject on which the everlasting Condition of Mankind will be determined? Let all who are capable of Thinking meditate on this Reason and Argument, and they cannot but see the Force of it immediately.

I. Cor. v. 10. *For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* If there was never any Account to be given of our Actions, it would not avail whether we did think on them or no: But since we are assured that there *will* be a *strict Enquiry made*, in the Great Day of the LORD JESUS, concerning our *Ways* and *Actions*, can there be any greater Reason possibly afforded, to move and determine all Mankind to pay a Regard to this too much neglected Duty?
The

The Actions of Rational Beings, who are therefore responsible, and accountable, will be brought into Judgment; the Secrets of all Hearts will be disclosed; the *Springs* and *Principles* by which any have been actuated will be examined. 'Tis not only the *Actions* will be judged, but chiefly the *Aims* and *Intentions* by which we have been govern'd in doing them. These are known to the Judge of all, and he forms his Estimate of Actions according to these *Intentions*, whether *good* or *bad*. If an *Action* be seemingly good to Appearance, but the *End* of doing it be vicious and sinister, it will entitle to no Reward from him who judges not by *outward Appearance*, but by the *Heart*. Since, then, there will be a strict Examination and Scrutiny made *hereafter* into the Ways and Actions of Mankind, and the Principles and Aims by which they have been guided, and which do either raise and encrease the Value of Actions, and entitle them to a Reward, or depreciate and sink their Value, according as the Intentions of the Agent are good or bad; since a Sentence of Absolution or Condemnation will be past on all according to the Nature and Quality of their Actions, inclusive of their Principles and Designs, is not this a very solid Reason to move all *so* to *think on their Ways* that they may be absolved and acquitted hereafter? For, whether

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we

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we think on them or no, God will call to a strict Account for them.

This would lead me, in the third Place,

III. To represent the happy *Fruit* and *Consequence* of a due mature Thoughtfulness of our Ways: But this shall be the Subject of the following Discourse.



Of Thinking

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PSALM cxix. 59.

I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet unto thy Testimonies.

IN treating on these Words I proposed the following Method. I. To shew in what Manner, and with what Disposition of Mind, we ought to *think on our Ways*. II. Why Mankind are obliged to comply with this important and necessary Duty. III. The happy Fruit and Consequence of it: By the Divine Blessing this will be attended with a sincere Conversion and Reformation of Life and Manners. IV. Make some practical Inferences.

I have discoursed already on the two first of these; and proceed now to the third Thing proposed, which is,

III. To represent the happy Fruit and Consequence which, by the Blessing of God, will

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will attend the due Observation and Practice of this Duty, viz. *A sincere Conversion to God, and a Reformation of Life and Manners.* The Proposition, containing the Sense of the Words, is this, That serious Thoughtfulness, and Consideration of our Ways, is the first necessary Step to be taken in order to *Conversion and Reformation.* The Truth of this I shall evince and demonstrate by the Reason of the Thing. 2. By the Word of God, and by various Examples.

1. Reason teaches this: For what is it that raises a Conviction of the Guilt of Sin in the Souls of any who have deviated from God's Ways, and violated his Laws and Precepts; what is it excites and awakens a Dread of Wrath, and Divine Vengeance, but such a serious Thoughtfulness as that before described? How is it possible that a Sinner should have any deep or lasting Impression on his Mind of the evil Nature and Quality of his past Ways, if he will not allow himself any Time for Deliberation? Though God hath endowed Men with Capacities of making Reflection on their Conduct, and requires them to do so, yet the Generality of Mankind are so eagerly bent on sensual Pleasures, that they will not admit a serious Thought of God and Eternity to abide in their Minds, but do what they can
to

to expell and banish it. If, by the hearing of the Word of God, or by any awful Dispensation of Providence, the Passion of Fear be moved, they presently contrive, by pursuing one Scene or other of Vanity, to free their Minds from this tormenting and uneasy Passion, and will not give way to any sedate Consideration or calm Reflection; will not *commune with their own Hearts*, but endeavour to suppress their Fears, and the Convictions of Conscience, by immersing themselves in a constant Round & Circle of carnal infatuating Pleasures. Reason teaches, that such an affected Ignorance, and voluntary Stupidity, is the most effectual Bar to Saving Repentance and Reformation. FELIX was a remarkable Instance of this. When PAUL *reasoned* before him of *Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come*, FELIX *trembled*: The Judge trembled before the Prisoner. Had he attended to those Convictions of Conscience, arising from a Reflection on his past unrighteous and unchaste Life and Actions, and his being accountable to God in the great Day of Judgment, such a proper Attention of his Mind to these great interesting Subjects might probably have been followed with a sincere Conversion to God, and a real Repentance & Reformation. But he was an Enemy to any serious Thoughtfulness; as usually all Sinners who are deter-
mined

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mined and resolved to continue in their evil Ways, are; and therefore he dismisses the Apostle for the present, contenting himself with this trifling dilatory Excuse, *When I have a convenient Season I will call for thee, Acts xxiv. 25.* But we never read that he found such a convenient Season. This shews how dangerous it is to slight and neglect the *present Opportunity* which offers for our Souls eternal Good and Welfare. Though the Arguments which are proposed in the Word of God are in themselves very weighty, yet they can have no Force on the Minds of Men, or Power to govern their Lives, if they are not maturely considered, and laid to Heart. How can the Threatenings of future Miseries be influential, if there be secret Unbelief, or no serious Consideration? For Faith, unless it be animated and invigorated by Meditation, will have no good Effect on the Heart, or Life, as we see by daily Experience. Many who *profess* this Faith, yet *live* as if they believed nothing of any *future* State of Recompence. Hence it is, that we see many who walk in those Ways of Vanity and Iniquity which the Word of God expressly forbids and condemns, by denouncing Threatenings of inexpressible Torments, who yet are secure, insensible of any Danger, as if they were in as safe Condition as could be desired. (The Reason

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Reason of this is, that such never allow themselves Time to *think on their Ways*; or, if they have a transient superficial Thought, they dismiss it, and will not admit it to abide so long as to have any good Efficacy. Such are Enemies to Thoughtfulness and Reflection, because they know that their Actions will not bear any strict Scrutiny and Examination. They hate the Light, and will not come to it, lest their Deeds should be reprov'd. Thus they shun all proper Methods of Conviction and Reformation. Reason teaches, that a Person must be first convinc'd, and know that he is in a wrong Way, before he will alter his Method and Manner of Living. What room can there be for such a Consciousness, which is the Foundation of Repentance, before a Sinner comes to review his past Ways and Actions? If a Man thinks, through Partiality and Self-love, that his Ways are right, how can it be expected he should reform? Incogitance and Thoughtlessness will make him fearless, and insensible of Danger. What the Reason of the Thing teaches the Word of God abundantly confirms. I shall therefore,

2. Prove, and demonstrate, by the Word of God, and various Examples therein recorded, That Consideration, and serious Thinking on a Man's Ways and Actions, is the
first

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first necessary Step to be taken, in order to Conversion, and the beginning of a virtuous and religious Life. To confirm and establish the Truth of this, see the 18th Chapter of EZEKIEL, 27th and 28th Verses, *When the wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right; because he considereth, and turneth away from all his Transgressions, that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.* Verses the 30th and 31st, *Therefore I will judge you, O House of Israel, every one according to his Ways, saith the Lord God: Repent, and turn yourselves from all your Transgressions, so Iniquity shall not be your Ruin. Cast away from you all your Transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new Heart, and a new Spirit; for why will you die, O House of Israel? For I have no Pleasure in the Death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.* Here you see the Foundation of a wicked Man's turning from his evil Ways is mentioned, *He considereth, and turneth away from his Wickedness.* When God calleth on Sinners to repent, and turn from their Transgressions, and to make to themselves a new Heart, and a new Spirit, what can be the Meaning of this? It would be the highest Absurdity to suppose this Language addressed to senseless Stocks, or Machines. 'Tis
Language

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Language addressed to Rational Beings, who are capable of understanding what is proposed, and of considering their past Actions, the Obliquity and Turpitude of them, which you see is mentioned by the Spirit of God as the first necessary Step to Repentance, the Renovation of the Heart, and the Reformation of Life.

I proceed now to illustrate further this doctrinal Proposition, by many Examples of sincere Penitents, recorded in the Sacred Scriptures. And here the first that claims our Notice and Regard is that of the Royal Psalmist, in the Words under Consideration, *I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet unto thy Testimonies.* He duly weighed his past Conduct, compared it with the Word of God, brought it to this Touchstone and Standard; and he found (and who will not upon a sincere Trial?) that he had deviated and swerved, *as a lost Sheep* (he uses this Similitude and apt Metaphor) from God's righteous and holy Commandments. And what was the Fruit of this impartial Review and Survey of his Life? He wisely resolved to regulate his future Life by the perfect unerring Rule of God's Word. And we read in the Verse immediately following the Text, that he brought his holy Resolutions into Practice without any Delay, *I made haste,*
O and

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and delayed not, to keep thy Commandments. He turned his Feet unto God's Testimonies, as a wise Traveller, as soon as by Consideration he finds that he has mistaken the right Way, will immediately turn into it. We all profess to be travelling in Search after Happiness; but what vast Crouds mistake the Way! And as long as they go on in a false erroneous Way, 'tis certain they must be the farther removed from true solid Happiness. Unless such come to sober Thought and Reflection, they will wander, and perish for ever. The Psalmist often professes what a high Esteem he had for the *Law of God*, and what *Delight* he found in *meditating therein*; what Love he had for God's Testimonies and Statutes; and this was the best Proof of it, that he guided his Actions by them: *Thy Word is a Lamp to my Feet, and a Light to my Paths.* In the 19th Psalm he gives the Law of God the highest Encomiums from the 7th to the 12th Verse, *The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul; the Testimonies of the Lord are sure, making wise the Simple; the Statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the Heart; the Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the Eyes, &c.* He not only in Words spake thus honourably, and with the greatest Regard, for the Law and Commandments of the Almighty, but in the stated and common Course of his Actions

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ACTIONS he manifested the *Sincerity* of his Love and Veneration for them; he *turned his Feet unto God's Testimonies*. The best on Earth will see Cause to say as he does, *Who can understand his Errors?* Though none can know all their Errors, and Deviations from God's Precepts, yet surely the more we accustom ourselves to think on our Ways, the more impartially and frequently we do this, the more probable it is that we shall use Care to lessen and diminish the Number of our Errors; and if we allow not ourselves in any *known* Transgressions and Violations of God's holy Precepts, we may humbly hope that all *involuntary* Errors and Imperfections will be forgiven; for Sincerity is accepted instead of Perfection. Whatever Loads of Guilt the Sinner has contracted, he will be stupid and insensible under them till he come to serious Consideration. DAVID himself, after the Commission of the foulest Sins of Adultery and Murder, was for a long Time thus stupid, and lay under the Guilt of those Sins without Repentance; which shews how greatly his Conscience was seared by such presumptuous deliberate Sins. We read nothing of his Repentance, till he was brought to it by NATHAN's well-adapted and contrived Parable, whereby he was obliged at last to see and acknowledge his Guilt, and that he himself *was the Man*

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upon whom he had past his Censure. Then he humbled himself before God, and implores the Pardon of his Sins, and the renewing Influence of the Holy Spirit, that his Soul might be cleansed and purified from such gross Pollution. Surely he had the greatest Reason, with the deepest Sorrow and Humiliation, to reflect on the unworthy and ungrateful Returns he had made for those peculiar Favours a gracious God had conferred on him, as well as the Injury he had done to Religion, by causing the Enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and to speak evil of the Ways of God. He had great Reason to pray fervently that God by restraining Grace would keep him back from presumptuous Sins, that none such for the future might have Dominion over him. Another remarkable Example of the happy Fruit of this sedate Thoughtfulness we have recorded in the Sacred Scriptures is that of St. PETER, who denied his Lord and Master with *curfing and swearing*, Mat. xxvi. 75. *Peter remembered the Words of Jesus, which said to him, Before the Cock croweth, thou shalt deny me thrice; and he went out, and wept bitterly.* Compare this with St. MARK's Account, in the 14th Chapter and 72d Verse, *Peter called to mind the Word which Jesus said to him; and when he thought thereon he wept.* To perfect and compleat the Account of this, see

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see LUKE xxii. 61, 62. *The Lord turned, and looked on Peter; and Peter remembered the Word of the Lord; and he went out, and wept bitterly.* When he thought on his Lord's repeated Warnings, and considered how ungrateful he had behaved towards his gracious Lord and Master, what horrible Guilt he had contracted by denying him, and that with cursing and swearing; (when he remembered these Things) he was melted into the deepest Sorrow; especially when Christ turned and looked upon him, he could not contain any longer, but seeks a Place of Retirement, where he might pour out his Soul in the most humble and undisguised Confession. The great Usefulness and Necessity of serious Thoughtfulness and Consideration, previous to a Sinner's sincere Repentance and Conversion, is strongly represented by our Saviour in the affecting and beautiful Parable of the Prodigal Son, who having *wasted his Substance by Riotous Living*, whereby is meant any Sinner who alienates his Heart and Life from God, and, being thoughtless of God, his Soul, and Eternity, indulges himself in gratifying sensual Passions, and is wholly sunk and immersed in carnal Lufts, sordid Pleasures, and vicious Courses. 'Tis observ'd at last, that being by his Luxury and Voluptuousness reduced to Poverty and Extremity of Want, this Distress

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stress inclined him to be considerate of his past
 Ways. *Luke xv. 17. 18. When he came to him-
 self, he said, How many hired Servants of my
 Father have Bread enough, and to spare, and I
 perish with Hunger ! I will arise, and go to
 my Father, and will say to him, Father, I
 have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and
 am not worthy to be called thy Son ; make me as
 one of thy hired Servants.* How came he to
 form such a wise and peremptory Resolution ?
 The Cause of this was, his Thinking on his
 Ways, when he *came to himself* : Intimating,
 that he had acted before a most irrational
 and absurd Part, like a Person destitute of
 his Rational Faculty. In the Sequel of that
 Parable we see the Compassion of God to
 returning penitent Sinners represented, and
 described in a very striking Manner. 'Tis
 sufficient for our Purpose at present to ob-
 serve, that he never resolved to *return to his
 Father* till he was in the deepest Distress,
 and reduced by his riotous profuse Way of
 living to extreme Poverty. This brought
 him to Consideration and calm Reflection.
 Thus, while carnal Sinners are estranged
 from God, and daily sink themselves deeper
 into the Pollutions of Vice, following one
 Scene of sensual Pleasures after another,
 they are thoughtless and inconsiderate, till
 by some Method or other they are stopt in
 their wild Courses of Vanity ; then they
 come.

come to themselves, think on their Ways, consider how ungratefully they have behaved towards God the Fountain of Goodness, what Guilt they have contracted, what Mercy and Patience they have abused, how deeply they have polluted their Souls, how much beneath the Dignity of reasonable Creatures they have lived, how greatly they have dishonoured God and injured their own Souls, and what direful Vengeance hangs over their Heads; I say, when they seriously weigh and consider these Things, they take up a fixed and speedy Resolution of returning to God from whom they have wickedly revolted, of confessing their heinous Sins, and imploring his Favour and Forgiveness. Being thus sensible of their past Acts of Rebellion against the Father of Spirits, and of Ingratitude against the Fountain of Goodness, they loath themselves in their own Sight; they will arise and go to God, whom though they have greatly offended yet he is a most gracious and merciful Father. The Consideration of this endearing Relation encourages them to hope for a kind Reception. In like manner we read, that when JOSEPH's Brethren were in great Distress, then they thought on their unnatural and base Behaviour towards their Brother, one of them making this Reflection, speaking the Sense, no doubt,

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doubt, of all the rest, *We are verily guilty concerning our Brother.*

Thus I have shewn, both from Reason and Scripture, that *Consideration* is the first necessary Step to *Conversion* and *sincere Repentance*.

I proceed now to the Improvement of this Subject. And first, We may hence see the Reason why the Word of God, and all the Arguments contained therein to promote Repentance, and Reformation of Life, are often ineffectual to the accomplishing this great Design. This is not owing to any Weakness in the Word of God, or the Arguments that are proposed, nor to any Want of Willingness or Power in the Spirit of God to reclaim wandering Sinners from the Error of their Ways, and turn them to God and Holiness, but to their Averseness and Reluctance to comply with this Duty of thinking on their Ways. I before observed that the Word of God contains the most weighty and powerful Arguments, which are adapted to move Mens Hopes and Fears; but these can have no Force or Efficacy, if they are not lain to Heart. How many have, by the hearing of the Word, been brought under Convictions, and for the present had some good Impressions made on their Minds? How often have Sinners,

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Sinners, like FELIX, been made to *tremble*? but, for want of employing their Minds in *thinking* on their past evil Ways, and *meditating* on Divine Truths in their Retirements, all these Convictions have been lost, and good Impressions have been erased and worn off, either by the Cares or Pleasures of this Life, and their Goodness has proved to be *like a Morning Cloud, and an early Dew, which quickly passeth away*. This our Lord takes Notice of in the Parable of the Sower; *Some Seed fell by the Way-side, and the Fowls of the Air came, and devoured it. Mark iv. 15.* he explains himself, *These are they by the Way-side, where the Word is sown; when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the Word that was sown in their Hearts.* With reference to others, the Cares of the World, and the Deceitfulness of Riches, choak the Word, and it becometh unfruitful. When therefore the *Word of God*, which is compared to *Seed*, is sown in the Heart, there must be Care used to *meditate* on it, otherwise Satan, the subtle Enemy of Mankind, will, by his Artifices and Stratagems, take away the Word that was sown, so that no Fruit shall be brought forth to Perfection. This is the Reason why some, who seemed to be melted into Sorrow for Sin, have afterward returned to their former Obduracy, and to the Commission of it.

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The Spirit of God *strove with them*, and attempted to convince them of their past evil Ways, and to turn them to God; but they neglected the happy Season of Divine Visitation, and adjourned the Attention of their Minds to this important Matter to another, and what they call *a more convenient*, Opportunity.

2. We may hence learn the great Usefulness of Afflictions, attended with the Divine Blessing. God by the Rod of Discipline intends to bring a thoughtless wandering Sinner to Consideration and Reflection, that he might be brought so to think on his Ways as to turn his Feet unto God's Testimonies. When the milder and softer Methods of his Grace have been slighted, when the Patience and Goodness of God have been abused, instead of being led to Repentance hereby, he has hardened himself in Impenitence, and is going on *treasuring up to himself Wrath against the Day of Wrath*. When God sees a Sinner in such wretched Circumstance, he has in Mercy laid his visiting and chastising Hand on him, in order to stop him in his wild Courses, to call him off from his Scenes of Vanity and Iniquity, who but must see the Necessity and Usefulness of such afflictive Dispensations of Providence, and the merciful Design and Intention of Heaven,
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by placing such a thoughtless carnal Sinner in such a Condition that he can scarce avoid making serious Reflections on his past vain and wicked Life? *In the Day of Adversity consider.* Whilst Men are pursuing one gay Scene of Pleasure after another, they are seldom brought to any Consideration; but in the Day of Adversity and Affliction, if ever, they will be disposed to call to bitter Remembrance their past evil Ways: And this, attended with the Divine Blessing, has been the Means of reclaiming them from their Wanderings and Errors. ELIHU excellently represents the happy Fruit of this Method of Divine Providence in *Job xxxvi. 8, 9, 10. If they be bound in Fetters, and be holden in Cords of Affliction, then he sheweth them their Work, and their Transgressions that they have exceeded; he openeth also their Ear to Discipline, and commandeth that they return from Iniquity.* Thus we don't read of the *Prodigal's* returning to his Father, or entertaining a Thought of it, while he was wallowing in his Excesses of Riot. 'Till he was reduced to the Extremity of Want, and ready to be starved, then he comes to himself, and forms a wise Resolution, and acts agreeably to it. We read of MANASSEH, that wicked King, that *he did Evil in the Sight of the Lord, like to the Abominations of the Heathen; that he reared up the Altars of Baalim, made*

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Groves, and worshipped all the Hosts of Heaven, and caused his Children to pass through the Fire in the Valley of Hinnom; shed innocent Blood, and filled Jerusalem with Blood: 'Tis said that the Lord spake to MANASSEH, and to his People, but they would not hearken. Wherefore the Lord brought on them the Captains of the Host of the King of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the Thorns, and bound him with Fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in Affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his Fathers, and prayed to him; and he was entreated of him, and heard his Supplication. See how useful Affliction was to this Monster of Iniquity! He thought on his Ways, saw the Evil of them, humbled himself, sought God earnestly, & obtained Mercy; see the History in the 33d Chapter of the Second Book of the CHRONICLES. The same may be observed concerning JOSEPH's Brethren: When they were in Distress, then they called to Mind their unnatural Treatment of their Brother, and the Guilt attending their Behaviour towards him, as was before noted. Whatever Way God uses to bring Sinners to such Consideration, they will see Cause to be thankful to him. Even good Men have on a Review seen Reason to bless God for this Method of Discipline, however grievous it may be to their Natures.

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They have found the great Benefit and Usefulness of such Divine Dispensations. DAVID acknowledges this in *Psalms* cxix. 67. *Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now I have kept thy Word; and thus he expresses himself, 'Tis good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy Statutes; and at the 75th Verse, I know, O Lord, that thy Judgments are right, and that thou in Faithfulness hast afflicted me. Thus he was brought to think on his Ways, and to turn his Feet unto God's Testimonies.*

3. We hence see what is the Cause of Mens Deviations from, and Violations of, the Laws and Precepts of Almighty God, and that is the Want of *serious Consideration*. Would Mankind, whom God hath endowed with Rational Powers, allow themselves Time to exercise and employ them; would they call themselves to an Account for their Actions, as becomes those who know they shall shortly be judged; would they remember that God is Omniscient and Omnipresent; it would be next to an Impossibility that they should give themselves up to follow such Courses of Prophaness and Immorality as many do. Would they consider what the miserable End of their momentary sordid Pleasures will be, such a Thought would make them to tremble. But they who are bent

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bent on evil Courses, and averse to a sober and virtuous Life, are also averse to think on their Ways: They who do Evil hate the Light, neither will they come to it least their Deeds should be reprov'd. God, by the Prophet HOSEA, mentions this as the Cause of growing Vice, Chap. vii. 2. *They consider not in their Hearts, that I remember all their Wickedness; now their own Doings have beset them about, they are before my Face.* See also JEREMIAH, Chap. viii. 6, *I bearken'd and heard, but they spake not aright, no Man repented him of his Wickedness, saying, what have I done? Every one turned to his Course, as the Horse rusheth into the Battle,*

4. Hence it follows, that Conversion to God, or sincere Repentance, which is the Beginning of a religious Life, is a Matter of our own Choice. For though the Spirit of God is the first Moving Cause, and chief Agent in convincing of Sin, and turning the Sinner from his evil Ways, yet he does this in a Way suitable to our reasonable Natures. The Word of God contains in it most powerful Arguments to move all to choose a Religious Life; and, no doubt, 'tis the Duty and Wisdom of all to meditate on these seriously and sedately. We are not to think that God will work on our Minds in an irresistible Manner, which would be contrary to

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to the Nature of Religion, and destroy the Liberty of Human Actions, and a Freedom of Choice; which would destroy all Religion at once. All Mankind are walking either in the Way of Holiness, which leads to Life and Happiness, or in the Way of Iniquity, which leads to Death and Misery. God expects and requires that all should think on that Way they walk in, and what the Consequence will be: If any have, by the Inticements of the Flesh, or the Influence of corrupt Examples, walked in the *broad Way that leads to Destruction*, let such, without Delay, turn their Feet into the Way of Life. Religion is a Matter of Choice. Verse the 30th of the Psalm wherein is the Text DAVID speaks thus: *I have chosen the Way of Truth*. When the Holy Spirit gives any spiritual Counsel, when he moves to this Duty of *Consideration*, resist not his gracious Intentions, but improve such a happy Season. The Reason why many continue unreformed, and unsanctified, is this; they will not observe and improve the Seasons of Mercy, wherein God enlightens their Minds! and inclines their Wills. How many have good Thoughts given by the Spirit of God, but they banish them out of their Minds. They will not hearken to the Voice of God, but harden their Hearts. Wherefore (to conclude), let all be persuaded to practise
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this Duty of Thinking on their Ways impartially and frequently. Let us see wherein we have deviated from the Way of Truth and Righteousness; rectify such Errors for the future; and regulate our Conduct with greater Exactness; be more circumspect and watchful; *See that ye walk circumspectly, not as Fools, but as wise, redeeming the Time.* Let us cleanse our Way by taking heed thereto according to God's Word. *Blessed are the Undeiled in the Way, who walk in the Law of the Lord.* Let us pray that our Ways may be directed, that we may keep God's Statutes, and that our Steps may be ordered by the Lord, that he may delight in the Way that we take. The Lord knows and approves the Way of the Righteous. Let us all take up that wise Resolution recommended in *Lamentations* iii. 40. of *Searching and trying our Ways, and turning again to the Lord.*



Of Casting

Of Casting our Care on God.

TWO SERMONS.

I. PETER v. 7.

*Casting all your Care on him; for
he careth for you.*

ST. PETER, in this, and the following, Epistle, endeavours to establish the Christians in the Faith, and to promote their Perseverance. To this End he encourages them, by several weighty Arguments, to Constancy amidst the sharpest Trials and Persecutions. He acquaints them, that thus they would be entitled to, and should certainly be Partakers of, very distinguishing Degrees of Glory and Blessedness, when Christ should come to the Final Judgment; their Faith would be found to Honour, Praise, and Glory, at the Appearing of Jesus Christ. He puts them in Remembrance of

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the Design of their Vocation, or being called to be the Disciples and Followers of Christ; *Hereunto ye were called, because Christ suffered for them, leaving us an Example, that we should follow his Steps*, Chap. ii. 21. In the 3d Chapter he gives very excellent Rules for the regulating their Conduct, that they might not needlessly or foolishly enrage their Enemies; but rather, by a blameless and holy Behaviour, might cause the Religion of Jesus to spread, and so bring others who were Strangers to it to be the Approvers and Professors thereof, when they saw what good Effect it had on their Lives and Conversations. He also mentions the Power of the Holy Spirit, which should strengthen and fortify them; the Spirit of God and of Glory, or the glorious Spirit of God, should rest on them. Chap: iv. 12, 13, 14. *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery Trial, which is to try you, as tho' some strange Thing happened to you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are made Partakers of Christ's Sufferings, that when his Glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding Joy.* Having thus warned them of the greatest Persecutions which might attend them, and they might be called to endure, he supposes, that such Discourse might terrify their Minds. He gives them very pertinent and excellent Advice, namely, to commit themselves entirely,
and

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and with full Resignation, to God, and to his Disposal. Verse 19, *Let them that suffer according to the Will of God commit the Keeping of their Souls to him, in well doing, as to a faithful Creator*; which Advice is very much like to this in the Words I have chosen to consider and improve, *Casting all your Care on him, for he careth for you*: Whatever Trials or Difficulties you may meet with, let not your Minds be intimidated or disturbed, and weakened with Cares, and Fears of what may possibly attend you; *Let not your Hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid*. As our Lord address'd to his Apostles, *Believe in God, &c.* so the Apostle here, *Cast all your Care on him, for he careth for you*: Refer yourselves to the Divine Disposal, either to guard you from any violent Sufferings for Christ and the Truth, or to support you under them. In discoursing on these Words I shall observe the following Method;

- I. *Inquire what are those Cares which may disturb the Minds of good Men, and that with reference to the Things and Concerns of this present World, and that which is to come.*
- II. *When the Christians Cares about these Matters do exceed proper Bounds, and are unwarrantable and sinful.*

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III. *Why*

these things are and how

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III. *Why these Cares are inordinate, and therefore to be avoided.*

IV. *The Method of having our Minds freed from these uneasy tormenting Cares, that is, to cast them all on God, who careth for us.*

I. I shall briefly enquire what are those *Cares* which may disturb the Minds of good Men ; Cares about the Affairs and Concerns of the present and future World. Our Saviour, discoursing so largely and fully as he does in the 6th Chapter of MATTHEW, shews the Unreasonableness and Impiety of anxious mistrustful Cares about the Things of this World, and that he knew that the Minds of his best Disciples were liable to be perplexed with them. A great Part of the Infelicities and Miseries of Mankind are owing to *themselves*, either by giving way to irregular disorderly Passions, or by multiplying Cares and Fears about future Events, which some of a melancholy Temper are apt alway to imagine will be very calamitous and distressing ; thus torturing their Souls, and making themselves uneasy about those Things which may never befall them ; not minding our Saviour's Words, *Sufficient for the Day is the Evil thereof*. Every Day will bring on some kind of Trouble or other ; and 'tis our Duty

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Duty to bear what Providence allots, and not to fill our Minds with any imaginary Fears and Cares about future Events, which we are entirely ignorant of, and are absolutely in the Divine Disposal, and under his Government, whether they shall be of a prosperous or adverse Nature. The best of Christians are liable to have their Minds burthen'd with a Variety of anxious Cares. *Casting all your Care* he addressees to those who were excellent Christians, and had obtained precious Faith; and yet his Advice to them implies that they might have their Souls perplex'd with Cares of various Kinds; they might have Personal Cares, and Cares about their Families, and about the Church of God, about their Souls, and an approaching Eternity: And some good religious Persons have been too apt to distract and disturb their Minds about God's Decrees, questioning whether they belong to the Elect of God or no: Others have often disturbed the Peace of their Minds, and been solicitously careful, how they should maintain their Ground in Religion, if they should ever be brought to such fiery Trials for Christ and the Truth, which others have been; and tho' they read of the Fortitude and Constancy of those Martyrs of Jesus, and are assured by the Word of God, that a faithful God will not suffer those who depend on him

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him *to be tempted above what they are able*, or what he will furnish them with Power, *to bear*, yet these Cares, and Doubts about their Perseverance and Constancy to the Death, have made some of the Servants of God pass their Time in great Fear and Anxiety, filling their Souls with vexatious tormenting Cares about what may never befall them; or, if it should, not having a right Consideration of God's Power by which his Servants are kept, or of his Faithfulness in fulfilling his Promises, that they shall have Strength answerable to their Circumstances; whereas they ought firmly to believe that God will never permit any more than ordinary Trials for his People trusting in him, but he will furnish them with new Powers to render them victorious. We are not to think that the Apostle, on the other hand, by exhorting them to cast all their Care on God, would discharge them from any Care of themselves, either for the Necessaries of this Life, or for the Salvation and Welfare of their immortal Souls: For as there must be a proper Care, Endeavour, and Industry, in order to our spiritual Improvement in Knowledge, Virtue, and Holiness, and whilst *God works in us to will and to do*, we are to be careful to maintain good Works, and be zealous in the Performance of them, and co-operate, by Divine Assistance, in
working

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working out our own Salvation, so also with regard to Temporal Things, we are not to imagine that by these Words the Apostle, in an ordinary State of Things, would have Christians lay aside all Care for the obtaining them, for *he that provideth not for his own*, especially those of his own House or Family, *bath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel*. Neither, because the Apostle to the *Philippians*, Chap. iv. 6. gives this Advice, *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, let your Request be made known to God*, or because our Saviour says, *Take no thought for the Morrow, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be cloathed*, are we to think that these Places of Scripture will warrant us to spend away Life in Indolence and Idleness, which will certainly, as we may see by many, bring to Beggary and Poverty: All that can be meant by such Places is, to guard against a distracting and mistrustful Care. A prudent Care and Industry about Temporal Things is very commendable, and preserves from many Temptations. This is so far from being sinful, that 'tis enjoined in many Places. There is no need to insist on this any further, because the Generality are well enough satisfied herein. The great Danger lies, on the other hand, of their being *choaked, and surfeited,*

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jeited, as our Saviour speaks, *with the Cares of this Life*. If, then, a moderate Care about the Things of this World be lawful; if it be prudent and commendable to project and form Schemes for the acquiring Temporal Things; and to use suitable Endeavours; if this be the Christian's Duty, much more must it be his Duty, Interest, and Wisdom, to exercise a becoming Care about his precious and immortal Soul. Tho' we are to *commit the Care and Keeping of our Souls to God*, yet it must be in well doing. Many act as though they were well enough satisfied that 'tis their Duty to be careful about the Affairs of this Life, and herein they are apt to exceed due Bounds and Limits, but at the same Time are careless and negligent of their Souls and Eternity; behaving herein as tho' they were resolved to confine the whole of their Care and Industry to the Concerns of this World, and in a literal Sense to cast the Care of their Souls wholly on God, and exercise no Care about this momentous Affair. So far are the Generality of Christians from being careless about Temporal Matters, that they are apt rather to exceed the proper Bounds: And because some of God's Servants have perplexed their Minds about Spiritual Matters, I shall, therefore, in the second Place,

II. 1. Shew

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1. Shew when the Christian's Care about the Things of this World is inordinate and criminal. 2. In Matters of Religion, when the Christian's Care may be said to be unwarrantable.

1. When may the Care which any employ about Temporal Things be said to be inordinate, immoderate, and criminal? To this I reply, In these Particulars following:

1st, When a Person's Care about this World, and the momentary Affairs thereof, is so great, and employs so much of his Thought and Time, that he is cold and indifferent in the Discharge of Religious Duties, if not wholly negligent of them. They who are so deeply immersed in Earthly Cares, that they leave no Time for the important Duties of Prayer, Meditation, and strict Examination of their Hearts and Ways, are certainly sinfully *careful about many Things*, while they neglect *the one Thing needful and necessary*, LUKE x. 41. Thus MARTHA's Care was at that Time an inordinate Care. She had an Opportunity of receiving Instructions from our Saviour; but she omits that, being encumber'd about other Matters. MARY's Choice of waving for that Time all Temporal Things and Business, and of applying her Mind wholly to Christ's

R Instructions,

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Instructions, is commended by him, as having *chosen the good Part*. If there be an Attendance on Religious Duties, such as hearing the Word of God, &c. and immediately after a Person returns to secular Business, without any serious Meditation on it, or Prayer to God for his Blessing, no Wonder if such retain not the good Seed that was sown, but *the Cares of this World choak the Word, and it becomes unfruitful*, MARK iv. 19. No doubt such Care about the World is unwarrantable, and immoderate; and so it is when, tho' a Person hath address'd himself to God in the Morning, he so wholly and intensely, throughout the Day, pursues his Worldly Affairs, that he scarce admits or entertains a Thought of God. Whereas the Christian whose Conversation is in Heaven will, of Consequence, have such a deep Tincture and Savour of Divine Things, that, even in the midst of Earthly Business, he will have frequent Thoughts of God, of the Worth of his Soul, and of the fading transitory Nature of those Things he labours to acquire, and that if he could *gain the whole World, and lose his Soul*, he should make a most absurd and wretched Exchange. Such Thoughts as these returning (as they will where there is a good Degree of Love to God) will not hinder any Earthly Business: Thus every one in his Calling may, and should,

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should, abide with God alway. Remember your Saviour's Advice, of *seeking first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness*; and such may depend on it, that what of this World's Good is most convenient, and conducive to their highest Welfare and Happiness, shall be added thereunto.

2dly, That Care of the World is inordinate and criminal, which is attended with a Distrust of God, and an Anxiety of Soul about the Event. This is what our Saviour more especially condemns, in the fore-quoted 6th Chapter of *Matth.* Ver. 25. and at the 30th Verse, *Shall he not much more cloath you, O ye of little Faith?* Having implored the Divine Blessing, and used a proper Care and Industry, be not, after this, of a mistrustful wavering Mind, fearing lest, one Day or other, you or yours should be brought to Want and Poverty; *for doth God take care of the Fowls of the Air, and will he not much more take care of you?* Shew not such a small Degree of Faith in God, and his Providence; never entertain such an irrational Distrust. The Word, in the Original, *μελμυα*, signifies not only a *Care*, but a *Fear* about the Event, such a Care as *μελίζει νυν*, divides the Mind with Doubts about the Success, or what the Event will be. When a Christian uses a prudent Care,

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and honest lawful Industry, and yet is uneasy in his Mind, doubting whether God will give Success to all; when he is full of Fears, that God will not bless, but rather blast all his Endeavours, so that he shall not have the Necessaries of Life; such a Care is very unlawful and criminal. Does God take care of inferior Animals, contemptible compared with you, and will he not much more cloath and feed you? Shew not such Disbelief of Divine Providence; weigh often our Saviour's excellent Discourse on this Subject, particularly what he says, in a way of upbraiding those who by his Doctrine have been enlightened in the Knowledge of God, his Providence, and a future State, *after all these Things*, of a temporal Nature, *do the Heathens seek*. 'Tis not to be so much wondered at, that the Pagans, who were not informed in the Nature of God, or in the Doctrine of Providence, and who had very poor and wavering Notions of any future State; no wonder if they sought with the utmost Solitude these Earthly Things, not having any Hope or certain Prospect of any other in a better World: But such distrustful Care is unbecoming the Disciples of Christ.

3. That is a criminal unwarrantable Care, when Men are more concerned to attain
Earthly

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Earthly than Heavenly Treasures: When they seek the Things of this World with as great Zeal and Industry as if their chief Happiness consisted in them. Our Lord hath determined it, that a Man's Life, neither the Happiness or Duration of it, consisteth in the Abundance of the Things which he possesseth. His Command is, *Lay not up for yourselves Treasures on Earth; but lay up for yourselves Treasures in Heaven; for where your Treasure is, there will your Heart be also*, Matth. vi. 19, 20. And, again, *Labour not for the Meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting Life*: That is, not so much for the former as for the latter. Suppose the Men of this World to use so much Care and Diligence for the attaining an Heavenly as they do for an Earthly Treasure, how commendable would this their Care and Diligence be? How many will exert all their Might, and employ all the Care and Sagacity they are Masters of, in order to acquire what they are not sure of acquiring, or, if they should gain it, may quickly be deprived thereof; or, if they do preserve it, does not any way encrease their Felicity; for Vanity is written on all Things here below. We must shortly leave all these Things. Will it afford any Consolation in your last Moments to consider with what Vehemence of Desire you have pursued these
fading

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fading perishing Things, and neglected and disregarded the substantial Glories and Felicities of Heaven? How will such see their Error when 'tis too late, and wish that they had been as careful about their Souls as they have been for a perishing Body, or that they had used as much Care to secure a Title to Glory and Happiness, as they have been to have a good Title to an Earthly Inheritance? I shall only add to this, they are in the worst Sense careful about Earthly Things who use unjust Methods to acquire them. This, at the first mentioning, is such a culpable and sinful Carefulness, that no one who lays the least Claim to the Name and Character of a Christian will be guilty of it, and therefore I shall prosecute this no further. That must be a most impious and irrational Care about the Things of this World which makes a Man barter away his Soul for the sake of acquiring them; nay, he would be chargeable with the vilest Impiety and Folly, if he could hereby gain the whole World, as our Saviour, who best knew the Worth and Value of the Soul of Man, has assured us.

Thus you see, in these Particulars, what that Care about temporal Things is which is unwarrantable and criminal. It may now be asked, Can there be an Excess of Care in Matters

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Matters of Religion, or can any one be too careful about his Soul, and the Things that relate to Eternity? In answer to this: No Doubt vast Multitudes of professing Christians fall vastly short of the Care they should use about their precious and immortal Souls; and this no doubt will be the Condemnation of Thousands, that they did not exercise a due Care and Industry about their everlasting Welfare; that they bestowed their principal Care about a perishing Body, or eagerly pursued the Gratification of their animal sensitive Appetites, and neglected their Souls, which are of more Worth than the whole World. There is great need therefore to excite Mankind to exercise a Care and Endeavour answerable to the unspeakable Value and Worth of their Souls. Whilst many are very negligent of their Souls, and have been very deficient in using a proper Care in *working out their own Salvation*, there have been some others who have carried this their Care, in Matters of Religion, beyond its proper Bounds and Limits. I have just hinted at this before, and shall enlarge somewhat more on it: For Instance, when Christians are alway fearful, and full of Doubts, whether they shall attain the Felicity and Glories of the other World, though they use the Care that God hath enjoined. They who guard against every known Sin, and do not
allow

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allow themselves in the Omission of any prescribed Duty, if such torment and vex their Souls with Cares and Fears, whether, after all they do, they shall attain eternal Life, 'tis plain this is an excessive Care; for it is representing God as an hard austere Master, who required Impossibilities of his Creatures. 'Tis the Way to make others think that Religion is fit only to bring People into a gloomy melancholy Temper. God would have his Servants walk on chearfully in the Ways of Holiness, and be comforted with the Hopes and Thoughts of that Glory which they have a Title to. They whose Care 'tis to shun all known Sin, and to observe and do what God commands, have, through the Merits of Christ, a Title to eternal Life; and all their Imperfections shall be pardoned. Such should not terrify themselves with the Fears of future Misery, or entertain unreasonable Doubts whether they shall obtain Salvation. This anxious Care and Solitude is carried beyond its Bounds. Further, they are excessively careful about their Souls, who not only regard God's revealed Will, but disturb their Minds about the Divine Decrees, and often question whether they are elected or no. In answer to this, let it be observed that 'tis not the Creature's Part to pry into the secret Councils and Decrees of Heaven; for, as MOSES says,

secret

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secret Things belong to the Lord our God; and Things revealed belong to us. Our Duty lies plain before us, and we may assure ourselves that there can be no secret Decree of Heaven which can contradict his revealed Will. We are told plainly, that Holiness of Heart and Life is a necessary Qualification for the Vision and Fruition of God. They, therefore, who have this Purity of Heart and Life have a solid Foundation to build their Hopes upon. We are to give all Diligence to make our Calling and Election sure: And how are we to do this? Not by perplexing our Minds about God's Decrees, but by adding to our Faith Virtue, to Virtue Patience, to Patience Godliness, &c. This is the Way of having an abundant Entrance ministred to us into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. They who live according to the Rules and Laws of the Gospel need not desire to pry into the secret Councils of the Almighty; for they may be assured, if they have their Fruit to Holiness, their End will be everlasting Life.

There are several other Things that might be mentioned, wherein there may be an excessive Care about Matters of Religion; but the Answer given to these two will suffice for any others. And now very little need to be said in the third Place,

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III. To prove these Cares are inordinate, and therefore to be avoided. And, First, with regard to those Cares of a Temporal Nature, it might easily be shewn that they are excessive and criminal; for they flow from a Distrust of God; they carry in them a Reflection on the Wisdom, Goodness, and Faithfulness of God; and consequently cannot but be very displeasing to him. *Psalm ix. 10. They that know thy Name will put their Trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.* They who know how good and gracious God has been to them, who have experienced the Bounties of his Providence; who have had seasonable Supplies in Times of Difficulty and Distress; who have been preserved amidst many Dangers; such ought to put their Trust and Confidence in God. 'Tis a Reflection on the Wisdom & Goodness of God to imagine that he knows not how to care for us, and therefore we are immoderately careful for ourselves; or an Affront to his Goodness to question whether he will provide for us; but more especially 'tis affronting his Power. The more any have experienced of the Goodness, Faithfulness, and Power of God, in caring for them heretofore, the more culpable must it be for such to mistrust whether he will provide and care for them in future Life. This was the aggravated Sin of
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the *Israelites* in the *Wilderness*, where they were maintained in a miraculous Manner by God's raining down Manna from Heaven; and after all, when God suffer'd them to be brought into any new Difficulty, how quickly did they question his Power, and shew their unbelieving Thoughts whether he could care for them or no! *Can God,* said they, *prepare a Table in the Wilderness?* So our Saviour calls those of his Disciples, who give way to this Unbelief and Mistrust of the Divine Care, *Persons of little Faith.*

2. To be anxious and solicitous about Temporal Things; whether God will care for you and yours, shews a Temper very unbecoming and indecent in such as expect and hope for the Felicities and Glories of a better World. We are but Pilgrims and Strangers on Earth; Christians are the Expectants of, and Candidates for, a blessed Eternity. How inconsistently, then, will such act, if they perplex their Minds about this World, wherein they shall have a momentary Abode? Our Saviour addresses to his Disciples, whom he calls *a little Flock*, compared with the much greater Number who refuse his gracious Government, *Fear not, little Flock, 'tis your Father's good Pleasure to give you the Kingdom, Luke xii. 32.* He that will receive you to his everlasting King-

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dom at last will not deny Necessaries in the Way to it. Fear not; be not of doubtful mistrustful Minds. Must it not be acting out of Character, when they who profess to expect and look for infinitely better Things in another World, are so anxiously concerned about the transitory Enjoyments of the present? Let Christians learn the Wisdom of being more thoughtful about their Souls and Eternity, and they will be less solicitous about the Things of this World.

3. Immoderate Cares about this World are criminal and culpable, because they flow from Covetousness; and they who are thus excessively careful are their own Tormentors. The Things of this World, being always in View, will, without great Watchfulness, insinuate too deeply into our Affections, and cool and lessen our Regard to Objects which are worthy and deserving our chief Esteem. The Servants of God are not out of Danger of having too deep an Impression made on their Minds by visible Objects, and therefore our Saviour saw the Necessity of giving his own Disciples this solemn Caution, *Take heed, and beware of Covetousness*; and confirms his Advice by a very solid Reason and Argument; *If the Love of the World once gain ground in the Soul*, and a Person begins to think that an Affluence is necessary to his Happiness,

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Happiness, he will be apt to exceed Bounds in his Care, and endeavour to acquire such an Affluence; and that anxious Care which flows from Covetousness, which is in Scripture called Idolatry, must be of a culpable Nature.

Finally, such a Care as this will lay a Person open and expose him to various dangerous Temptations. This will incline a Man to make use of any shifting, evasive, and unjust Methods, in order to accomplish the Schemes he has formed, and the End which he chiefly proposes. Most justly, therefore, does the Apostle affirm that *the Love of the World is the Root of all Evil. They, says he, that will be rich, they who are determined this Way, fall into Temptation, and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Perdition and Destruction, for the Love of Money is the Root of all Evil, which while some have coveted after they have erred from the Faith, and pierced themselves through with many Sorrows.* I. TIMOTHY, vi. 9, 10. • This may suffice to convince all how necessary it is that they guard against excessive criminal Cares about Things of a temporal Nature, since they flow from a Distrust of God's Goodness, Faithfulness, and Power, and shew that such have a mean Belief of the Doctrine of Providence. They
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argue a Temper very unbecoming, and unsuitable to those who pretend to hope for infinitely better Things in another World. They flow from Covetousness, and that Love of the World which exposes to many Snares and Temptations. The proper Use we should make of this is to moderate our Affections towards all the perishing transitory Enjoyments of this Life. And this Wisdom of Temper and Conduct we may learn by the Consideration of the fading Nature of all Earthly Things, so as not to take too great Complacency in them, while we enjoy them, ~~nor~~ grieve immoderately when by Providence we may be bereaved of them. Thus the Apostle, from the Consideration of the Shortness of Time, recommends the Duty of regulating our Passions, and moderating our Affections towards them, *They that weep for Temporal Losses should be as though they wept not, they who rejoice in Earthly Possessions and Treasures should behave with such an Indifference towards them, as if they rejoiced not; they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this World as not abusing it; for the Fashion of this World passeth away,* I. Corinth. vii. 29, 30, 31. Very little need to be said to prove that such an excessive Care about Matters of Religion, or Spiritual Affairs, is unwarrantable; such as expresses itself in a continual doubting without Reason

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Reason whether eternal Salvation shall be obtained, or about God's Decrees, or our own Perseverance and Fidelity to death, &c. because there are very few, comparatively, to be found who err in this Matter. However, because the Apostle, writing to those who were in danger of the hottest Persecution for the Truth's sake, advises them to *cast all their Care on God*, we may rationally enough suppose, that they might have their Minds perplexed with Doubts how they should behave, if their Faith and Constancy should be tried in the severest Manner. He therefore advises them to *cast all their Care on God*; assuring them, that God *cared for them*, and would furnish them with more than ordinary Assistance, if he called them to more than ordinary Trials of Faith and Patience. But inasmuch as the Generality of Professors are too apt to exceed in their Care about Temporal Things, I have dwelt the longer on this, to shew the criminal and culpable Nature of such an Anxiety of Mind.

This would lead to the fourth Head of Discourse; but this, with the Inferences from the Whole, shall be the Subject of the following Sermon.



Of Casting

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I. PETER v. 7.

*Casting all your Care on him; for
he careth for you.*

IN treating on these Words, I proposed the following Method; I. To inquire what are those Cares which may disturb the Minds of good Men, and that with reference to this World, and that which is to come. II. When the Christian's Cares about this present Life, and the next, do exceed proper Bounds and Limits. III. Why these Cares, particularly of a Temporal Nature, are sinful, and therefore to be avoided. IV. The Method here prescribed, of having our Minds disburthened of and freed from these uneasy tormenting Cares, and that is, to *cast all our Care on God, who careth for us.* The three first of these have been largely considered

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considered. I proceed to the fourth Thing proposed :

IV. *Of casting our Care on God, who careth for us.* This is the Advice and wise Counsel which the Apostle gives. This, Christians will always find, is the best and most useful Method of having their Minds freed from distressing Cares. Compare this with the Psalmist's Advice, in the 55th *Psalms*, Verse the 22d, *Cast thy Burthen on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.* This weighty Exhortation and Direction, if duely weighed and followed, would very much calm the Mind, and disburthen it of many restless distracting Cares and Fears. Whether the Cares that perplex your Minds are of a temporal or spiritual Nature, this Direction is necessary to be observed, and will be found to be very useful. Here it will be proper to shew what is meant by this Expression of *casting all our Care on God*, and then what is necessary with regard to the Manner of doing this, that God may in a peculiar Way *care for us*. As to the first of these, to *cast our Care on God* denotes, that we are to refer ourselves, and the Disposal of all our Affairs, to the wise, unerring, and good Providence of God ; to leave all our Concerns in his Hand ; to commit our Ways to him, and, amidst all the Afflictions and Disappointments of Life, to
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be satisfied with his Disposal. This in the general is meant by *casting all our Care on God*. In a particular Sense, hereby is intended, that Christians should put their whole Trust and Confidence in God, being assured, that he who is *Excellent in Counsel*, and whose *Understanding is infinite*, can, in Ways, and by Methods, unknown to all Mortals, either free them from those Troubles & Difficulties wherein they are involved, or make them turn to some spiritual Advantage to them. *Psalms xxxvii. 5. Commit thy Way to the Lord*; and what is meant by this we by the following Words are informed; *Trust in him, and he shall bring it to pass*. So *Prov. xvi. 3. Commit thy Works to the Lord, and thy Thoughts shall be established*. And to persuade you thus to trust in the Lord in all Difficulties, consider him as possessed of all Power and Goodness, able and willing to sustain you. Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting Strength. He is your Creator, and will care for the Works of his Hands. He will either free from Troubles, or give you Strength sufficient to bear them. *Psalms lxi. 2. When my Heart is overwhelmed within me, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I*. This was the Course which DAVID often took. When he was in deep Distress he looked to God as his *Rock and Defence*. Thus, in a Way of Triumph,

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Triumph, he speaks, *In God is my Salvation, and my Glory, the Rock of my Strength; and my Refuge is in God.* He then, like one who had found the great Benefit and Advantage of casting his Care thus on God, gives the like Advice to all the Pious and Devout amongst the ISRAELITES, *Trust in him at all Times, ye People; pour out your Hearts before him; God is a Refuge for us.*

However dismal and discouraging to human Appearance your State and Condition may be, yet firmly and stedfastly believe that God, whose Wisdom is consummate, can easily free and extricate you. When you are apt to be fearful of the Event, apprehending the Clouds gathering, and the Storm coming, then consider what an Almighty, Wise, Gracious, and Faithful Being you have to confide in; he is *the Rock of Ages*, who has inexhausted Treasures of Power and Goodness. In Consequence of this, the *casting all our Care on God* implies, that we are to be contented with his Disposal, being assured that under the Conduct of his gracious unerring Providence all Things shall conspire and work together for our Welfare and Happiness. When the Christian reasons thus with himself, ‘What tho’ I am now in great Distress and Difficulties?’ I will guard against hard Thoughts

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‘ of God ; and will not repine or murmur.
 ‘ Tho’ all Things seem to be against me, yet,
 ‘ against Hope, I will believe in Hope ; be-
 ‘ ing assured that a Good and Gracious God
 ‘ has a tender Regard to me ; and though
 ‘ his Dispensations may be very grievous,
 ‘ yet I will be contented ; for ’tis the Cup
 ‘ which my Father gives me to drink.’ This
 is very acceptable to God. The Conduct of
 Providence towards JACOB’s Family was of
 such intricate mysterious Nature, that he
 once said, *All these Things are against me* ; but
 he lived long enough to see his Error, and
 that *all* ended in his *Welfare* and that of
 many others.

The Words of the Apostle, considered to
 whom they are addressed, contain in them
 a very weighty Argument, and Reason, to
 prevail on them to comply with his Advice :
for he careth for you. These were Persons
 of a truly religious Character, sincere Be-
 lievers in Christ ; for he says of them, that
 they had *obtained like precious Faith*, they
 had been brought to embrace Christianity,
 after our Saviour’s Ascension to Heaven. This
 is noted to shew the Excellence of their
 Faith in Christ, whom they never saw in
 Flesh. See I. Peter, i. 8. *Whom having not
 seen, ye love : In whom, though now ye see him
 not, yet believing, ye rejoice with Joy unspeak-
 able,*

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able, and full of Glory. They had hitherto shewed the Sincerity and Strength of their Faith in the Christian Doctrine, by enduring Sufferings for the Truth, and were in danger of more severe Trials, of which he warns them, and would have them be in a Preparation even for the fiery Trial, if God should see fit to have their Faith, Patience, and Fortitude, thus exercised. And to fortify and steel their Minds, he offers the most weighty Arguments in his Epistles: Rationally supposing that what he said on this Subject might excite many gloomy and perplexing Cares, he very pertinently advises them to *cast all their Care on God*; and offers to their Consideration a most cogent Reason, *for he careth for you*; you may depend on it he will not disregard you, but in a more especial Manner he will either guard you from the malicious Assaults of your Enemies, or furnish you with Strength sufficient for all your Trials; and if your Faith should be tried in the most shocking Manner, this will redound to your Honour, and distinguishing Degree of Glory, when Christ, in whom you trust, whom you love above all, and rejoice in, shall appear. Considering the Persons to whom he speaks, and addresses his Advice with this Argument, what could be more encouraging? He who is the Almighty Creator, the most gracious Governor
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of the World, and Disposer of all Events, will care for you.

There is a *general* and a *special* Providence. By the *general Providence* is meant, that Care which God exercises in providing for the Supply of his Creatures Wants, preserving them in Life as long as he sees fit, and supporting them by his Power: But by the *special Providence* of God is meant that peculiar Regard which he shews to those of a virtuous Character and Conduct. The *Righteous* Lord loveth *Righteousness*, and *Righteous* Men. His Countenance does behold the Upright, his Eyes run to and fro through the whole Earth, to shew himself strong in the Behalf of those whose Hearts are perfect towards him. *All his Paths* and Dispensations of Providence *are Mercy and Truth to them that keep his Covenant, and his Testimonies*, Psalm xxv. 10. And the Apostle affirms with regard to *those who love God*, that *all Things work together for their Good*; that is, for the strengthening and increasing their Virtues and Graces, and so for the fitting and preparing them for a State of distinguishing Glory and Happiness forever. God careth for such; therefore they may, and ought to, cast all their Care on him, and so be entirely satisfied with his Disposal, which is guided by consummate Wisdom, and
boundless

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boundless Goodness. Thus God keeps his People in perfect Peace, because they trust in him, and stay themselves on his Power, Truth, and Mercy. A firm unshaken Belief of the Rectitude of the Will and Counsels of God would compose the Minds of his People at all Times; for 'tis certain there can be no Error or Mistake in the Management of him who is infinite in Wisdom, Goodness, and Power.

I now proceed to shew in what *Manner* we must *cast all our Care on God*, that we may have a Rational Assurance that he will *care for us*, both with regard to our Spiritual and Temporal Affairs. And with regard to the *Manner* of doing this, 'tis obvious we are not to think that we may so cast all our Care for Soul and Body on God, so as to be indolent and careless in acting our Parts. He that should say, I have cast all my Care on God for the Supply of the Necessaries of Life, and use no lawful Industry for the acquiring these, would act a very weak and foolish Part. Much more inexcusable would they be who, on the same Pretence, should be entirely negligent of their precious Souls, and their everlasting Welfare; for God offers his Assistance, not to encourage our Sloth, but that we might co-operate with it, and *work out our own Salvation*. But this is very plain:

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plain : And I shall therefore stay no longer on this. We are to cast all our Care on God, that is, by *Prayer*, and *persevering* in the Way he hath prescribed. 1st, by *Prayer*. If the Christian's Mind be at any Time disturbed with Cares, whether they are of a Spiritual Nature or Temporal, the best Method he can use is, to apply himself to *the God of all Grace*. Spread thy Grievances before thy Almighty Friend, who cares for thee. This is necessary, not to *inform* him of them, for every Thought of our Minds is perfectly *known* unto him, but to encrease thy Faith in his Goodness. St. PAUL directs his beloved *Philippians* to this Method, in the 4th Chapter of that Epistle, Verse the 6th, *Be careful for nothing ; but in every thing, by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, let your Request be made known to God*. Does any thing burthen your Minds? This is the *Way* of having the Tumults of the Spirit allayed ; seek Direction and Support from Heaven. This *Way*, in every State or Condition of Life, *make known your Requests to God*. If you are apt to be overwhelmed with Fears about your Souls, and their everlasting Welfare ; are you, after all your Endeavours, apt to have an uneasy vexatious Doubt whether you shall be victorious over all the numerous, subtle, and powerful Enemies of your Salvation, and whether you shall

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shall persevere to the End, and obtain eternal Life? Go to God, and beg of him, who is able to *bruise Satan under your Feet*, that you may be freed from such distracting Cares, and that his *Peace, which passeth all Understanding, may keep your Hearts and Minds*. Follow the same Method, if your Soul is perplexed about the Things of this World, whether you and yours shall have what is necessary for your Support & Maintenance: Beg of God that you may be delivered from such unbelieving Doubts; that you may be enabled to exercise such a Faith in his Providence, which extends to Creatures of an inferior Species, as never more to doubt about these Matters, but rather to say with the Psalmist, *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want*, Psalm xxiii. 1. This is the best Method of having our Minds disburthened of all anxious Cares. As the Apostle directs Christians hereunto, so we have a Pattern of this, which above all others we are obliged to observe and imitate; for we read that Christ, being in an Agony, when his Soul was troubled within him, and he was sore amazed, that he prayed more earnestly: He prayed that that bitter Cup might pass from him; but he cast his Care by Prayer on God, and was fully and absolutely resigned, saying, *Father, not my Will, but thine be done*. And the Author to

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the *Hebrews* intimates to us, that though he was not freed from Death when he offered strong Cries to Heaven, yet he was freed from his Fears. In like manner, if Christians did spread their Grievances before God, they might expect the blessed Consequence; which is this, that *the Peace of God should keep their Hearts and Minds*. Who is there that has taken this Course, under any tormenting Cares, but must own that some Benefit has attended it? Have you poured out your Hearts to God in Prayer, and cannot you testify, from your own Experience, that this is the best Remedy? Whilst the pensive Soul meditates on its Troubles, it proves its own Tormentor; but to acquaint yourselves with God, and seek him, is the only way of gaining Peace and Tranquility. DAVID gives his Testimony to this, *Psalms xxxiv. 4, 5. I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my Fears. Others followed his Example; They looked to him, and were lightened, and their Faces were not ashamed.*

There are some *Seasons* when the Servants of God, who have devoted themselves to him, should, by humble and fervent Prayer, cast their Care on him; such as,

1. In a Season of spiritual Defection. Persons of this Character may not alway perceive

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ceive the *Light of God's Countenance lifted up on them* with the same Degree of Brightness; but it may be, in some measure, eclipsed. Perhaps it is a Priviledge belonging only to the Blessed above *alway* to enjoy the same Brightness of God's Favour.

They alway behold the Face of our Father who is in Heaven: But in *this* State of Imperfection, the best of God's Servants may sometimes find their Joy in God abated, and sunk to a low Ebb. 'Tis through Hopes and Fears we pass to the Kingdom of God. *Isaiah* 1. 10. *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the Voice of his Servant, that walketh in Darkness, and hath no Light? Let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.* This no doubt is a very melancholy Season, and State of Mind. Such cannot but mourn. If God hides his Face, they cannot be easy till God again *lifts up the Light of his Countenance upon them.* Sometimes this may be only an Imagination, proceeding from a melancholy Temper of Mind, to which some Persons, by a natural Constitution and Temperament of Body, may be subject. At other times it may be really so, occasioned by some Omissions of Duty, or Commissions of known Sin. If the latter be the Cause, no doubt such ought to humble themselves before

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God ; to acknowledge their Transgressions with unfeigned Sorrow ; and, having exercised this Repentance, they are not to indulge desponding Thoughts and Cares, or imagine that God hath forgotten to be Gracious, or in Anger shut up his Bowels of Compassion, or that he hath *cast them off for ever*. If such unbelieving Thoughts or Cares have any way disturbed your Souls, cast them out ; own that it was your Infirmary that ever you should admit them. This is a Season wherein you should *cast your Care on God, trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon your God*. Seek God in Prayer, that he may appear again to your Joy, and restore the Light of his Countenance.

Another Season of *casting all our Care on God* is, when you may be overwhelmed with such Cares, temporal or spiritual, which have been before mentioned. Has a mistrustful Thought of God, and of his good Providence, entered into your Minds ? Reject and cast it out immediately : Consider the Unreasonableness of admitting these to abide in your Souls ; how they will disorder and discompose your Spirits, and disqualify for the Service of God. Say then with the holy Psalmist, *Why art thou cast down, O my Soul, and why art thou disquieted within me ?*
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Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the Help of his Countenance. Meditate on the Divine Goodness, and Faithfulness, and of the many Demonstrations you have had of God's tender paternal Care of you hitherto. Let former Experiences of God's Mercy and Lovingkindness confirm and strengthen your Faith and Trust in him for the future. Bless God for all his former Acts of Mercy to your Souls and Bodies; commit your Way to him; and thus your wavering uneasy Minds shall be established, and be assured with regard to the Welfare and Salvation of your precious Souls. Nothing shall be wanting to perfect and complete that Work of Sanctification and Holiness which he hath begun.

Add to this the *Season* of Affliction, coming from the Hand of God, is a fit Season for the Servants of God to cast their Care on their Heavenly Father. Where should Creatures in the Day of Distress seek but to God? The Command runs thus, *Call upon me in the Day of Trouble, &c.* When God chastens, this should be so far from driving any from him, that this Method of Divine Chastisement should bring us nearer to God, and oftener before the Throne of Grace; for then, at such a Time, he calls to fervent Prayer and Humiliation. 'Tis a Matter of
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no small Difficulty to cast our Care on God in a right Manner in the Day of Trouble and Affliction. *Then* the Christian should examine himself, and his past Conduct, and endeavour to know wherefore God contends with him. He should search and try his Ways, that the Fruit of all may be the taking away of his Sin; that being truly humble under the Mighty Hand of God, knowing that no Affliction cometh by Chance, but is commissioned by Heaven, he may be assured of his Heavenly Father's Care of him, and that *as a Father pitieth his Children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him*; and that he hath merciful and gracious Intentions in all afflictive Dispensations. He may by such Considerations be brought to an intire Satisfaction of Mind in the Divine Disposals, and say, *though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* Does God at any Time lay his visiting and chastening Hand on any of his Servants? They may conclude, that Love to their Souls guides the Rod of Discipline. He aims at their spiritual Welfare. He is so far from casting off the Care of them, that he may never shew greater Care of them than by such Methods, tho' grievous to Nature; making them to be profitable to their Souls; making them to greater Degrees Partakers of his Holiness; encreasing their Hatred of Sin; shewing them more clearly the Vanity of
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this World; raising their Value for the never-fading Joys and Felicities of the heavenly State; strengthening their Faith of such a State of perfect Happiness, their Hopes of and Meetness for it. Thus should the Servants of God cast their Care on him *in the Day of Trouble*. Say then, 'What though
' my Afflictions from the Hand of God are
' grievous to my Nature? yet I am assured
' that he careth for me. These are all intended by him for the promoting my spiritual and eternal Good and Happiness,
' and to dispose me for the World where all
' anxious Cares, all Misery, Sorrow, and
' Sin, will for ever be done away.

This leads me to make some Improvement of what hath been said, and that shall be in these following Inferences.

1. Since the People of God are subject to such various Cares in this *present Life*, this shews, that *this* is not our *Rest*, or *State of Happiness*. The Dispensations of Providence do clearly enough prove that there is a future State of Rest for the People of God. How often do we see the vilest and worst of Men living in Ease and Prosperity, enjoying as much as Heart could wish? Being furnished with Materials for the Gratification of their animal Passions and sensual Desires

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fires, they cast off all Thought and Care about Futurity. They defy the Almighty; despise his Laws and Authority; and often deride, scorn, and persecute the Servants of God: Whilst, on the other hand, those who are dear to God, whom he, by a special Providence, cares for, labour under great oppressing Cares and Fears about their eternal State, *working out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling*: And, with reference to Things of a Temporal Nature, having a very low Measure of them, so as only to have the Necessaries of Life. Who, that weighs this Conduct of Providence in this Life, but must be ready to declare his firm Belief of a *future* State of Recompence for the Righteous and the Wicked? For if God, the righteous Governor and Judge, will shew a Regard to those whose principal Care 'tis to please him, and by a *patient Continuance in well-doing* to secure their eternal Welfare; if he has a Regard to pious and devout Men, and will reward them, and punish impious profane Wretches, then it follows, That THERE MUST BE A FUTURE STATE; for this is not alway done so visibly in this World. Since, then, there is a *Rest that remains for the People of God*, this should make them more willing to enter into it. What is there in this World that should make any of the Servants of God so
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very willing to continue *here*, where they are subject to such numerous Cares, and disquieting Fears, about their Souls and Bodies? This should make the Servants of God willing to exchange a World of Sorrow, Misery, and Sin, for a World of perfect Joy, Holiness, and Happiness. Be assured there is a Rest that remains for the People of God; and let those who are of this Character and Number frequently entertain their Minds with delightful Meditations on it, that they may readily and most willingly, at God's Call and Summons, enter into it.

2. Let the Servants of God admire his Goodness, that he will take such Care of them as to Soul and Body, and contemplate the Perfections of God, who vouchsafes to care for them, that they may be more calm, composed, and serene in their Minds, and daily free and disburthen their Minds of all anxious mistrustful Doubts and Anxieties. Must it not be a delightful Theme and Subject to the Servants of God to be employing themselves this Way? Will *God care for you*? Can any Thing afford greater Pleasure and Joy? What should give Satisfaction to the pensive Soul, if this Doctrine of a peculiar Care of Heaven, in favour of virtuous Men, will not? He who would commit the Care and Conduct of any Business

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of Consequence to another, if he will act prudently, had need first be satisfied, as far as he can, of that Person's Prudence, Integrity, and Ability of managing the Trust; and when he is satisfied herein, he can with Satisfaction commit his Affairs to him. We should frequently meditate on the Perfections of God. He is Infinite in Wisdom; he has Power to provide for you; Millions are fed and supported by his providential Care every Day; he provided for the *Israelites* in a barren Wilderness; he is a faithful God, keeping Covenant and Mercy. They who know his Name will put their Trust in him. The more carefully and frequently the Servants of God contemplate the Divine Perfections, the more ready they will be to cast their Care on him. And should not your Experience of the Goodness of God in supplying your Wants, in feeding and supporting you with a parental Care, encourage you to commit the Management of your Affairs to him, with an entire Acquiescence of Mind in his Disposal? Surely he who hath hitherto helped and provided for you, will not cast off the Care of your Souls; he who hath taken care of your frail Bodies will employ his principal Care for the Welfare of your Souls.

3. We may hence learn the Happiness
and

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and Privilege of God's upright Servants. Their gracious God and Father in a *peculiar* Sense *careth for them*. How should this comfort the Minds of good Men, when they are apt to be perplexed and disturbed with anxious Cares about their Souls and Bodies, or about their Children; especially when they are ready to leave them in a World of Misery and Sin; but the Minds of good Men may, and ought to be, free from such Disquietude and Anxiety, by considering that with God the Fatherless find Mercy, and that he hath promised to be a God to his People, and to theirs after them. *Like as a Father pitieth his Children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth our Frame, he remembereth that we are Dust*, Psa. ciii. 13, 14. See, to this Purpose, *Jerem. xix. 11. Leave thy fatherless Children; I will preserve them alive; and let thy Widows trust in me.* The Prophet HABAKKUK supposed himself to be reduced to the lowest Ebb, and deprived of the Comforts of Life: Still he resolved to *rejoice in the Lord*, and to *joy in the God of his Salvation*, Chap. iii. ver. 17, 18. Or if they should have a deep Concern for the Church of God, and the Interest of Religion, yet entertain no mistrustful Cares; for know who hath said that *the Gates of Hell*, all infernal Powers, (to which we may add all earthly Powers) though they should

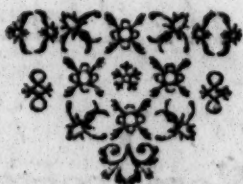
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unite in the wicked Design, *shall not prevail*; no Weapon formed against it shall prosper. How inexpressibly happy is the Condition of all the sincere Servants of God, that they can at all Times go to God their Heavenly Father with a filial Confidence and Freedom, as to their Almighty Friend, and may be assured of his caring for them! The Miseries and Infelicities to which Mankind are subject are for the greatest Part owing to *themselves*. How many do by their Folly and Iniquity pervert their Ways; and tho' 'tis evident that by their own Indiscretion, or wilful Transgression, they have plunged themselves into Distress, instead of Being sensible of, and humbled for their own Follies, their Hearts are apt to fret against the Lord? How many are there, even of a virtuous Character, who are too apt to indulge and give way to irregular disorderly Passions, or to multiply Cares, and vexatious Fears, without duly considering their own great Privilege of casting all their Care on God, or making use of that most excellent Remedy prescribed by the Apostle, of *making known their Wants to God by Prayer, and Supplication, with Thanksgiving* for Mercies already received.

Thus you might expect to find that happy Fruit of a peaceable Mind, and *the Peace of God which passeth all Understanding shall keep*

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keep your Hearts and Minds through Christ Jesus. Though the Christian should be destitute of Earthly Friends, let him not be disconsolate; for he hath an Almighty, Wise, and Gracious Friend, who careth for him. Let such therefore who are of this Character be determined for the future to cast all their Care for Soul and Body on him who is their God in a peculiar Sense. Be assured, that *all Things shall work together for Good to them that love God.*



The Witnesses of the Resurrection
of Christ proved to be valid.

TWO SERMONS.

ACTS X. 40, 41.

*Him God raised up the third Day,
and shewed him openly; not to
all the People, but to Witnesses
chosen before of God, who did
eat and drink with him, after he
rose from the Dead.*

THESE Words contain a considerable
Part of the Discourse which St. PETER
delivered in the Hearing of CORNELIUS, and
many others. He had been admonished by
an Angel to send for PETER; and God dis-
posed the Apostle to go with the Messengers
whom CORNELIUS sent. The Manner by
which God inclined him to go with them
we have related in this Chapter, which was
by giving him a *Vision of all Manner of Four-
footed*

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footed Beasts of the Earth, and Wild Beasts, and Creeping Things, and Fowls of the Air; and by a Voice from Heaven he was ordered to *arise, kill, and eat.* The Design of the Vision was to free and disengage his Mind of all pre-conceived Notions and Prejudices against conversing with the *Gentiles.* By his Education in the *Jewish* Religion he had been taught the *Unlawfulness* of using many Things, because they were prohibited by the Law of *MOSES*: By an Abstinence from which Things, being declared to be *unclean*, the *Jews* were separated from other Nations. While the Apostle was meditating on and considering the Meaning of this divine Vision, it was explained to him: The Messengers whom *CORNELIUS* had sent came, and enquired for *PETER*; and he was ordered to *go with them*; no more to look on the *Gentiles* as *common* or *unclean*, and so unfit to be conversed with, *What God hath cleansed, call not thou common.* In Compliance with this heavenly Vision and Admonition, *PETER* goes with them. *CORNELIUS* and his Friends waited for him. *PETER*, being thus assured that it was the Will of God that the *Gentiles* should have the Doctrine of *Life, and Salvation by Christ*, preached to *them*, as well as *others*, begins his Discourse at the 34th Verse, and continues it to the 44th. He now perceived that
God

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God was no Respector of Persons, but that in every Nation he that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of him.

The Substance of his Discourse is this; That there is an universal Offer and Proposal made, in the Gospel, of Pardon and Reconciliation: That Christ, who brought this Doctrine, was a Prophet commissioned by God: That he had a Divine Unction, having the Holy Ghost without Measure; and so enabled to confirm and establish his Mission and Authority. Verse the 38th, *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with Power; who went about doing Good, and healing all that were oppressed with the Devil; for God was with him.* And that there could be no good Reason to question the Divinity of his Doctrine & Miracles; for *they who were with him from the Beginning were Witnesses of what he said and did.* In the Verses chosen he asserts CHRIST'S RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD by the Power of God; and further assures them, that God had *ordained* this same Jesus to be the Judge both of the Quick and Dead. To this he adds the Testimony of all the Prophets, who declared that through him all who believed should *receive the Remission of Sins.* The Words I have chosen assert the Doctrine of CHRIST'S RESURRECTION FROM
THE

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THE DEAD BY THE POWER OF GOD. This Doctrine is the Basis and Foundation of the Christian Religion, which all Christians ought firmly to believe, and to be able to give the Reasons of this their Faith, and to answer the Cavils, and subtle Objections, which Unbelievers may offer against it; and which shall be considered, and answered, in the Sequel. In treating on these Words, I shall,

I. *Shew that our Lord gave undoubted and full Evidence of the Reality and Certainty of his RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD; and that the Witnesses hereof were Persons of unblemished Truth and Veracity.*

II. *That our Faith may be established and fixed on a Rational Foundation, I shall consider the most material Objections which Infidels have offer'd, and return an Answer to them.*

III. *Consider the vast Moment and Importance of this Doctrine: And,*

IV. *What practical Improvement ought to be made of it:*

I. I observe that our Lord gave undoubted and full Evidence of the Reality and Certainty

tainty of his Resurrection from the Dead, &c. The Apostle here affirms that *God raised up Christ from the Dead*. The same is asserted in several other Places. See the 2d Chapter of the *Acts*, Verse the 24th, *Him, being delivered by the determinate Counsel and Fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken (speaking to the Jews), and by wicked Hands have crucified and slain: (He adds) Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the Pains of Death, because it was not possible that he should be holden by it; Verse the 32d, This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are Witnesses*, compared with the 3d Chapter, Verse the 15th. When the Apostle St. PAUL mentions this, he uses a Variety of Words to express the exceeding Greatness of that Power which was displayed and exerted herein, *Eph. i. 19, 20*. So in another Place he is said to be *raised by the Glory of the Father*. That our Saviour had the like Power is manifest from those Words, *Destroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raise it again*. I shall not quote the various Passages recorded by the Evangelists (referring to his *appearing after his Resurrection*); for these must be well known. When he found his Disciples backward to believe his Resurrection, he thus addressed to them, *O Fools, and slow of Heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these Things, and to enter into his Glory?*

Glory? Luke xxiv. 25, 26. Though at first they knew not who it was that talked with them, *their Eyes* being miraculously held, yet he afterwards removed that which obstructed the Organ of Vision, and gave them the fullest Evidence and Assurance of the Reality of his Resurrection. Verse the 30th and 31st, *It came to pass as he sat at Meat with them, he took Bread, blessed, and brake it, and gave to them; and their Eyes were opened, and they knew him: Then they called to Remembrance what he had said to them, and how he interpreted the Scriptures to them: They said one to another, Did not our Hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the Way, and opened to us the Scriptures?* We have also an Account of his appearing to the Apostles when THOMAS was absent. John xx. 19, 20. *That same Day at Evening, being the first Day of the Week, when the Doors were shut, where the Disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst of them, and saith to them, Peace be to you! and when he had so said, he shewed to them his Hands and his Side; then were the Disciples glad when they saw the Lord. And they joined in their Testimony: But THOMAS would not believe their united Witness; but affirmed that unless he could see in his Hands the Print of the Nails, and put his Finger into the Print of the Nails, and thrust his Hand into his Side,*

which had been pierced on the Cross, *he would not believe.* Our Lord condescended to give him this full sensible Demonstration he desired; as you may see in the 26th and 27th Verses of that Chapter, *After eight Days his Disciples were within, and Thomas with them; then came Jesus, the Doors being shut, (for the Reason above mentioned) and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be to you! Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy Finger, and behold my Hands; and reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into my Side, and be not faithless, but believing.* THOMAS, having that full Evidence he desired, being thus fully convinced, addresses him in an Extasy of Joy, *My Lord, and my God!* The greater the Difficulty was to cure and remove his Infidelity, the greater Reason have all succeeding Ages to believe. The more incredulous he was at first, the more satisfactory must his Witness and Testimony be, when he was fully persuaded of this Truth. Had our Lord refused to give this sensible Demonstration and Evidence of the Reality and Certainty of his Resurrection; had he only appeared, and then suddenly vanished and disappeared, and left them doubtful; this would have shock'd and weaken'd the Faith of all After-Ages: But he took care to give his Apostles the fullest Proof they possibly could desire. They had frequent Opportunities of conversing
with

with him, of touching his Body, and of eating with him. He did not *immediately* after his Resurrection *ascend to Heaven*; for had he done so, after *once* appearing to them, they might hesitate, and doubt whether they had really seen him or no. It was requisite that he should give an undoubted Certainty in this important Article of Faith. For this Purpose, he delayed his Ascension forty Days after his Resurrection; see *Acts* i. 3, 4. Having just before said, that he gave Commandment to the Apostles whom he had chosen, it follows, *to whom also he shewed himself alive after his Passion, by many infallible Proofs, being seen of them forty Days, and speaking of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.* He gave them particular Instructions concerning the Methods of propagating and spreading his Kingdom, or Gospel, and ordered them to tarry at *Jerusalem*, till the Holy Ghost should be poured out on them, whereby they should have the fullest Instructions, and miraculous Preparations, for their arduous Work. By conferring with them, walking, and eating, they had infallible Proofs that he was the very Person who had been crucified; so that they might as well doubt of their own Existence, as of the Truth and Reality of his Resurrection. They had the Privilege of seeing him *ascending* to Heaven. Not only was he
seen

seen and conversed with by his Apostles, but he was seen by more than *five hundred Brethren at once*, I. *Corinth.* xv. 6. But the Apostles being particularly chosen to be the Witnesses hereof, he gave them the most unquestionable Evidence. After his Ascension he appeared to STEPHEN the Protomartyr, and to PAUL, who gives his Testimony, *Last of all, he was seen of me.* Should any Person now enquire, Whether those who were the Witnesses of Christ's Resurrection were such as we may depend on for their Veracity and Faithfulness? the Answer to this Query will naturally lead me to the second Head of Discourse, which is,

II. To shew that the Witness and Testimony which the Apostles gave is sufficient and valid. And this will appear to all unprejudiced Persons, from these two following Considerations and Reasons. 1st, Because what they testified was concerning a Matter of *Fact*, such as is capable of being examined, and known by their Senses. 2dly, They had no Temptations of Earthly Honours, Preferments, or Secular Interest, to allure them to give such a Testimony, but quite the reverse; they exposed themselves for it to the Rage and Malice of Unbelievers.

I. What they testified was concerning a
Matter

Matter of *Fact*, capable of being examined and known by their Senses. Had our risen Lord and Saviour given them an imperfect transient Vision of himself, and suddenly vanished, they might have been deceived, or thought themselves to be so; and consequently could not have given their Testimony so full and clear as might free their Minds, or others, from all Doubt. That there might not be the least Shadow of Reason for Suspicion, or any Room for Uncertainty, in the relating this Fact, I have before observed, That our Lord *demonstrated* the Truth of his Resurrection to them by such *Proofs* as are *infallible*: For if the Testimony of our Senses is not to be believed, there could be no Certainty of *any thing*. St. JOHN has a Reference to this in his first Epistle, Chapter the first, 1st and 2d Verses, *That which was from the Beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen, which we have looked on, and our Hands have handled of the Word of Life; for the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.* We may consider these Words, not only as asserting the Truth of Christ's assuming the Human Nature, but also the Truth of his Resurrection from the Dead; for this was the grand Article of Faith, which they were to bear witness to,
and

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and declare to others; for so he expresses himself, *That which we have seen, and heard, we declare to you.*

2. The Apostles of our Lord could have no Temptations of Earthly Honours, Preferments, or any Secular Interest, to allure or entice them to give this Witness or Testimony; but, on the contrary, they exposed themselves hereby to the Rage and Malice of Unbelievers. As they could not be deceived or mistaken, having the infallible Proofs of their *Senses*, (which, when rightly circumstantial, are proper and undeniable Judges of *Matters of Fact*) so neither can any reasonably imagine that they would deceive others by uniting in such a Testimony, if they knew it to be false; and that for this Reason, because they confirmed their Testimony by their Blood; neither could they be terrified, or moved from it, by the Menaces and Threatenings of their most inveterate Enemies. 'Tis contrary to all our Notions of Human Nature, and the Movements of the Passions, to suppose that any will persist in maintaining a *known* Error, and *lie*, when *for the sake of it* he exposes himself to all kinds of ignominious Treatment, Disgrace, and Persecutions. Whatever Enemies threatened, they could not be in the least moved from asserting the Doctrine of Christ's

Christ's Resurrection. To suppose that they should persist in bearing this witness, when at the same Time they knew it to be a Lie and an Imposture, (though, for asserting and publishing this known Lie and Falshood they could propose no temporal Advantage to themselves; so far from this, that, on the other hand, they lay themselves open to all kinds of Difficulties, Calamities, and Sufferings) is most irrational and absurd. Could they have proposed to themselves any temporal Emoluments, or worldly Advantages; had they any View of Preferments or Dignity; this might invalidate and weaken their Testimony: But when, instead of this, they were liable, and actually exposed, to the Malice of an unbelieving World, and could think of nothing but of suffering the most violent Deaths for *this their Testimony*;— This is sufficient with any considering unprejudiced Person to establish his Faith in the Testimony they gave; and consequently there is not the least Shadow of Reason to think that the Apostles were *unfaithful* or *treacherous* herein. There is the highest Reason to think that they were Men of unblemished Veracity, and unshaken Fidelity; and, consequently, that *their Witness is valid*, and sufficient to *confirm the Faith* of all *future Ages*. Though our Belief of this be thus rationally established, yet there have been some who

would favour and support the Cause of Infidelity, who have raised some Objections. 'Tis therefore fit that these should be considered, and answered; for Christians ought to be able to give *the Reasons of the Faith and Hope they profess*, and to answer the Cavils of *Gainsayers*. This leads me, in the third Place,

III. To take notice of those Objections which have been brought, and to return an Answer to them. --- Now, the most considerable Objections which have been offered are these following. The first is taken from the *Time* of Christ's Resurrection. Others, to favour the Cause of Infidelity, have affirmed, that it favours of an Imposture, because our Lord did not appear to his *Enemies* who *crucified him*, but to his *Friends*, or, as 'tis said in the Text, to *Witnesses chosen*, not to *all the People* of *Jerusalem*. Some have framed an Objection even from what the Evangelists have said relating to this Matter. They have opposed the *Verity* and *Reality* of his *Resurrection*, because we read, that *he vanished out of their Sight*, and for that 'tis said, *when the Disciples were assembled, the Doors being shut, he appeared in the midst of them*. These are the principal Objections which have been brought. The first refers to the *Time* of his Resurrection, or the *Space*
of

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of Time between his Crucifixion and Resurrection. This is grounded on what we read in *Matth. xii. 40.* *As Jonas was three Days and three Nights in the Whale's Belly, so shall the Son of Man be three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth:* Whence it seems to follow, that Christ's Body was to lie in the Grave *three whole Days and three Nights.* Some have conceived that he died, and was buried on the *Thursday*; otherwise how could he be in the Grave *three Nights*, since *early* on the *first Day of the Week* he arose? But the proper Answer to this must be taken from the common Way of computing Time among the *Hebrews.* Now, *they* began to compute the *natural Day* from the *Evening*, or the *Night foregoing*; thus, *the Evening and the Morning were the first Day.* Moreover, 'tis a Rule amongst the *Jews*, according to *their Computation*, that *a Part* of the Day is put for *the whole.* Judge, then, according to *this their Way of computing Time*, and the Objection is soon removed. Christ was in the Grave *One* whole natural Day, and *Part* of two other natural Days; so that, according to *their usual Way of Computation*, Christ was *three Days and three Nights* in the Grave. Thus, for Example, God appointed that every Male Child should be circumcised *on the eighth Day*, though there were but *six entire Days*, for the Day of the Child's

Birth was reckoned one, and the Day of the Circumcision another. Thus our Lord was crucified on a *Friday*, and, according to their Way of computing Time, that which was done in one Day included the *whole Day* and *Night* preceding. So he lay in the Grave the *Saturday*, and early in the Morning on the *first Day* of the Week he arose; which was *the third Day*, comprehending also for the same Reason the *Night following*. Thus, according to the *Jewish Method of computing*, you see how easily this Cavil and Objection relating to the *Time* of our Lord's Resurrection is removed. Others, inclined to Infidelity, may object, and be ready to intimate, that it favours of an Imposture, because the *Seal* fixed on the Door of the Sepulchre was *broken*. They may be apt to think that this *Seal* was *fixed* and *agreed* between the *Chief Priests* and the *Disciples of our Lord*, that it *should not be broken* till the Day *fixed* for his Resurrection was *fully come*. But they are very much mistaken who imagine that the *Apostles* could be any Way *concerned* in this Matter; for they were quite dismayed with Fear, and had not the least Notion or Hope of his rising again; even though he often told them that *he should rise the third Day*. The *Seal* was put by the *Jews* to guard against any Fraud or Imposture in this Case. But what signified all this Caution, when
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the POWER OF GOD was employed and exerted herein? *The Angel of the Lord came, and rolled away the Stone from the Door of the Sepulchre.* The Keepers were terrified, and went and related what had happened. This weak Cavil, invented in favour of Infidelity, destroys *itself*; for if *they were all asleep*, how could they give in their Testimony, that *the Disciples came, and stole away the Body*? They covenanted with the Soldiers to affirm this, that the *Disciples of Jesus should steal away the Body whilst they slept.* However, this is a common Report among the *Jews* to this Day. There is nothing so weak, absurd, and contrary to Sense and Reason, which Persons bent on Infidelity will not assert and maintain. Others have objected against Christ's Resurrection, and insinuated, that the Whole looks *like an Imposture*, because he did not *appear or shew himself openly to all the Inhabitants of Jerusalem*, but only to his *chosen Friends and Disciples.* To this it may, and has been, rationally reply'd, That if there are a sufficient Number of Witnesses to any important Matter of Fact, concerning which they are qualified and fitted to judge, there can be no room for any solid Objection against believing the Apostles were chiefly appointed, and chosen of God, to bear this witness. This is what St. Peter, in his Discourse to *Cornelius* and others, in-

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sisted on; *he was shewed openly, not to all the People, &c.*

But some one or other may say, Would not his appearing to *all* the People of *Judea* entirely have removed their Unbelief, and even forced and obliged them to acknowledge their Guilt in crucifying him? Would not this Method most probably have brought them to deep Repentance, and to full Persuasion of his Divine Mission and Authority? To this I reply, That our Saviour had before his Death abundantly demonstrated his Mission, and that God was with him, being anointed with the Holy Ghost, working God-like and most beneficent Miracles *publicly*, and *in open View of all*; yet, after all the *Proofs* and *Demonstrations* he had given, they rejected, condemned and crucified him. And so full were they of blind Rage and Malice, that had he shewed himself openly, 'tis very probable, as an eminent Writer observes, they would have attempted to crucify him again, even as they endeavoured to murder LAZARUS, whom Christ had raised from the Dead, fearing least many would, on this Account, believe on him. Moreover, by such a Method as that just mentioned, viz. his shewing himself openly to all the People, if it had wrought a Conviction in their Minds, yet it would have been a forcible

forcible one, wherein there is no Virtue. God therefore was pleased to give them who were not invincibly prejudiced such a Conviction as should be wrought in a Rational Way. In order hereto, he gave the Apostles of our Lord the fullest Evidence of the Truth of Christ's Resurrection, and sealed their Testimony by enabling them to work Miracles for the Confirmation of their Doctrine, and fortified them with an unshaken Resolution and Courage to suffer the most violent Deaths, rather than to retract, or deny the Truth: And they who would not be convinced by this Method must be obstinately fixed in Infidelity. The Question here is not what we might be apt to think to be the most proper Method, but whether there was sufficient Reason for them to believe the Testimony and Witness which the Apostles gave; and if it appears that the Apostles of our Lord were qualified to work Miracles in Confirmation of this Truth, this must be sufficient to incline any sincere unprejudiced Person to admit and entertain their Testimony: For we cannot, consistently with any right Notions of the Wisdom, Holiness, Goodness, or Faithfulness of God, think that he would employ his Power to enable any to work Miracles to establish a Lie and an Imposture. When Persons are *determined to be Unbelievers*, they will never
be

be at a loss for *Objections* against the Truth. Though there should be a *great Number* of very *credible Witnesses* to any *Matter of Fact*, yet still they will be apt to say, Why was there not a *greater Number*, or why should *their* Faith rest upon the Witness of *others*; which by the way destroys the Credibility of all History; and such might as well say, Why does not Christ appear in every Age to convince Unbelievers?

Others have been ready to form an Objection against the Reality and Certainty of our Lord's Resurrection, even from what the *Evangelists themselves* have *related* concerning it, particularly when they say *he appeared*, and then *quickly vanished out of their Sight*; and we read in *St. John*, the Place before quoted, that he enter'd into the Room where the Disciples were assembled, *the Doors being shut*. Whence they would infer, that he could not have a *real Body*, and consequently that his *Body* was *not risen again*; for how could a *Body* like *ours* penetrate the *Door*? How could he come amongst them whilst the *Doors* were *shut*? At another Time we read that *he joined himself with two Disciples*, and yet 'tis expressly said, that *their Eyes were held that they knew him not*; how then could they be supposed to be *sufficient Witnesses* of the *real Person* who walked and talked with them?

them? This, which is quoted from the Evangelists themselves, may, therefore, at first View, seem to be a very plausible and material Objection. But, however it may seem to favour the Cause of Infidelity, the Weakness and Vanity of all this will quickly be seen, if you consider those other Passages in the Evangelists, where 'tis said that *our Lord did eat, and drink, and converse with his Disciples*; and particularly, when we read that he condescended to submit to the strictest Examination, as in the Case of THOMAS, who being most unreasonably incredulous, disbelieving the joint Testimony of *all the other Apostles*, was afterward by infallible Proof *convinced* of the Truth. They were not brought to believe upon very slight Terms. They had not the least Notion of his *rising again*. They had entertained the Hopes of *Preferment* under him; imagining that he would restore their ruined State to its former Dignity and Splendor: Which will explain the Meaning of that Request of the Mother of ZEBEDEE's Children, that the *one of her Sons might sit, one on his Right Hand, and the other on his Left, in his Kingdom*. They were led away with the common prevailing Notion. When, therefore, they *saw him crucified*, their *Hopes* were *entirely lost*: But when he was *risen again*, their Hopes of a *temporal Kingdom*, and of Honour and

A a Dignity

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Dignity, revived: Which will explain the Meaning of that Question, *Lord wilt thou at this Time restore the Kingdom to Israel?* *Acts i. 6.* You may observe, at Verse the 3d, that this Question was proposed to him *after* his Resurrection, and he had shewed himself alive after his Passion by many infallible Proofs. I have noted this to shew the Weakness of those who could ever imagine that the Apostles should make any Compact with the *Jews* touching his Resurrection; whereas, you see, they had not the least *Hope* of it; neither did they, without the most sensible *Proof* and *Demonstration*, believe it. 'Tis observable of those two Disciples who were travelling to *Emmaus* on the Day of our Lord's Resurrection, to whom he joined himself, and 'tis said that *their Eyes were holden that they should not know him*, *Luke xxiv. 16.* at Ver. 30, 31. *it came to pass, as he sat at Meat with them, he took Bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them; and their Eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their Sight:* But this he did not, till, by eating and conversing with them, he had given them *full Satisfaction*, so that they could declare to the Apostles, that he was *known of them in breaking of Bread*, Ver. 35. Whilst these two Disciples related these Things, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith to them, *Peace be to you!*
but

but they, upon the Account of his sudden Appearing, were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a *Spirit*. He said to them, *Why are ye troubled, and why do Thoughts arise in your Hearts? Behold my Hands, and my Feet, that it is I myself: Handle me, and see; for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones as ye see me have:* And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his Hands and his Feet. Next you read of his *eating* before them, and of his *explaining the Scriptures* to them; see from the 35th to the 47th Verse of that Chapter. What then, though we read that he *appeared*, and then *suddenly vanished* out of their Sight, will this prove that he had *no* real Body? What could such a trifling cavilling Objector say to that Place of Scripture, where we read, that (before his Crucifixion) he *passed through the Multitude*, and escaped their pernicious Design against him, when they were attempting to throw him down a Precipice? Will such a one say, that before his Death he had no real Body? With regard to what we read of his coming among his Disciples when *the Doors were shut*, what Difficulty can there be in replying to this? For how easily could he by his *Power* open the *Doors*, though his Disciples might not *perceive* it; even as we read the Angel opened the Door of the Prison for PETER?

180 *Christ's Resurrection proved.*

Thus I have answered the most plausible Objections which can be, or have been, brought against this Truth. There is an excellent Pamphlet, intituled, *The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus*, where these, and such like, Objections are more fully answered. For there is no Reason to fear to propose what any may or can object; for *Truth* never shuns the Light. 'Tis *Error* and *Falsity* only that seeks the Shade and Concealment.

This would lead me to consider the *vast Importance* of this Doctrine; but this will be the Subject of another Discourse,



Of the

Of the Importance of the Doctrine
of Christ's Resurrection.

ACTS x. 40, 41.

*Him God raised up the third Day,
and shewed him openly; not to
all the People, but to Witnesses
chosen before of God, who did
eat and drink with him, after he
rose from the Dead.*

IN discoursing on these Words, I have shewn that our Lord gave the fullest and most undoubted Evidence and Demonstration of the Reality and Certainty of his Resurrection from the Dead: II. That the Faith of Christians might be well established, and fixed on a Rational Foundation, I have proposed the most material Objections which any Unbelievers may have offered, and returned an Answer to them. I proceed now to shew the vast Importance of the Doctrine of our Lord's Resurrection, and of
our

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our having a stedfast Faith in it. This will appear by the following Considerations.

1st, That Christ's Resurrection from the Dead is the Confirmation of his being the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World. 2dly, This was that great fundamental Article of our Faith, which the Apostles were chosen of God to bear Witness and Testimony of to the World. 3dly, This is the Ground of our Hope of Justification in the Sight of God. 4thly, To this we owe the sure Hopes we have of a blessed Resurrection to immortal Life & Happiness.

1st, The Importance of this Doctrine, and of having a stedfast Faith herein, is very evident, if you consider that this is the Confirmation of the Truth of his being the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World. He suffered Death under the Notion of being a Deceiver, an Impostor, and a Blasphemer, though he was, as to his real Character, the Son of God, the Lord of Glory. Had they *known* him to be so, they would not have crucified him. What they did was done *ignorantly*; for which Reason the most charitable Jesus, in his expiring Moments, recommended them to his Father's Mercy; *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Not that their
their

their Ignorance did wholly excuse them from Guilt; for had they *duely* attended to his *miraculous Works* they might have *known* him to be *the great Prophet* and *Messiah* whom God had promised to send into the World; had they *searched the Scriptures*, and compared them with his Doctrine and Miracles, they would have seen that these *testified* of him. Their Ignorance, therefore, and outrageous Zeal were culpable and criminal. St. PETER observes, that though they did it *ignorantly*, yet it was by *wicked Hands*. Our Lord often appealed to his Works, that by these they might form a Judgment of his Character and Mission. When he saw that nothing would move them, but, after all the Demonstrations he should give of the Divinity of his Mission and Authority, that they would condemn and crucify him, he tells them that enquired after a Sign, that no other should be given them but this of his RESURRECTION, and what should follow it. He predicted and foretold his *Death*, and that he would *rise again the third Day*.

- Since, then, he appealed to this, 'tis the same as if he had said, ' After all that I ' have done to prove my Divine Mission, if ' *I rise not from the Dead believe not in me.*' His RESURRECTION, which could be accomplished by no Power but that of GOD, wiped off the Ignominy of his Cross; by
this

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this he was entirely freed from the Calumny of being a Deceiver and a Blasphemer. Had he not been risen from the Dead, there could be no sufficient Reason for believing in him: But when God displayed his Power in raising him, he hereby set his Seal to his Divine Mission and Doctrine: For 'tis contrary to all the Notions we can form of the Wisdom, Goodness, and Holiness, of GOD, to suppose that he should exert his Power in raising from the Dead one who had counterfeited a Commission from him, and laid a false Claim to the Honour of being the promised Messiah, the Son of God, and Saviour of the World: Consequently, his Resurrection, being accomplished by the Power of GOD, was the Confirmation of his Mission, and of the Truth of his Character and Doctrine. Observable to this Purpose are the Words of the Apostle, *Rom. i. 4. Declared to be the Son of God, with Power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the Resurrection from the Dead.* The Meaning of which is, that God, by raising our Saviour from the Dead, declared to all the World that he was his Son, the promised Messiah, and Saviour: God sealed his Mission and Authority. This may explain what the Apostle means when he says, that *Christ was justified in the Spirit*; that is, freed from the Aspersions of being a Deceiver, for he was *put to death*

death in the Flesh, but quickened, or raised to Life, by the Spirit.

2dly, The great Importance of this Article of our Faith appears from hence, that this was the principal Thing which the Apostles were chosen of God to testify to the World. That he expired on the Cross was visible to all the Spectators. He hung for several Hours on the Cross, and the Soldier pierced his Side, from whence flowed forth Water and Blood. It was therefore the RESURRECTION they were principally to bear witness to: *Acts ii. 32. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are Witnesses.* See also *Acts i. 21, 22. Wherefore of those Men who have accompanied with us, all the Time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the Baptism of John, to the same Day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a Witness with us of his RESURRECTION.* JUDAS, the Traitor, had forfeited the Honour of the Apostleship, falling from it by his Transgression; and, being struck with amazing Horror at the View of his most execrable Sin, despairing of Mercy, became his own Executioner, and went to his own Place. It was necessary they should fill up the Vacancy; and you may observe, that one Qualification of the Person that must be chosen in his room, and be added

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to the Number of the other eleven Apostles, was this, he must be chosen out of their own Company, one who had associated with them, all the Time that Christ was with them, beginning from the Baptism of John, to the Day wherein he ascended, and was received up to Heaven. And the great Design of his being thus elected was, that he might join with them, and unite his Testimony with theirs to the Truth of Christ's RESURRECTION. This was necessary, to make him a proper authentick Witness. Answerable hereto, we read, that, when the Apostles endeavoured to convert any to the Christian Faith, they insist on Christ's Death, whereby he sealed the Truth of his Doctrine, and that God sealed the same by displaying his Power in RAISING HIM FROM THE DEAD; and also affirmed, that God had ordained him to be the Judge of all. These are the Subjects which St. PETER insisted on, when he preached the Gospel to CORNELIUS and his Kintmen. So in I. Cor. xv. 3, 4. *I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our Sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried; and that he rose again the third Day according to the Scriptures.* Upon this latter Article he chiefly insists and enlarges, observing that *he was seen, after his Resurrection, of CEPHAS (that is, of PETER) then*
of

of the Twelve; after that he was seen of above five hundred Brethren at once; to which he subjoins his own Testimony, Last of all he was seen of me, after his Ascension to Heaven; which necessarily presupposed his RESURRECTION. There being no Article of Religion of greater Weight and Moment than this, which is the very Basis of Christianity, therefore the Apostles dwell upon it, and bore their Witness before their most bitter and implacable Enemies. After our Lord's Ascension to Heaven, and pouring out the Holy Ghost on his Apostles, PETER address'd himself to those who had been guilty of crucifying the Lord of Life and Glory, and charged them to their Faces with this Sin, and affirmed that *God had raised him from the Dead*; and on this weighty fundamental Article of Faith he enlarges, as you may read by consulting the 2d Chapter of the *Acts*, from the 23d to the 34th Verse. To this Purpose he quotes a Passage from DAVID, *Psalms* xvi. 10. where that Prophet thus expresses himself, *My Flesh also shall rest in Hope, for thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy-One to see Corruption.* Thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell, that is, in the invisible State, the Mansion of the Blessed, and of happy Souls. *Hades*, or *adns*, signifies *the invisible State*, *adns* the proper Signification of the Word. Let

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it be observed, that it was an ancient prevailing Opinion that *adns* or *aldns*, denoting *the invisible State*, consisted of two Partitions, one belonging to the blessed and happy Departed Spirits, the other to the wretched and miserable Spirits. To the former of these the Soul of Christ went when he expired on the Cross; which the Words of our Lord to the Penitent Thief will confirm; *This Day thou shalt be with me in Paradise*: Which, by the Way, shews the Necessity of altering that Article of *Christ's Descent into Hell*, which might better be thus changed, *He went to the invisible State of happy and blessed Spirits. Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy-One to see Corruption*: St. PETER, quoting this illustrious Prophecy, remarks, that DAVID could not mean this of *himself*, as in the 31st Verse of the second Chapter of the ACTS, but that it must *necessarily* be understood of the Messiah; *He*, that is DAVID, *seeing this before, being inspired by the Holy Ghost, spake of the Resurrection of Christ, That his Soul was not left in Hell*; did not abide long in that separate State from the Body, *neither did his Flesh see Corruption*; he continued not so long in the Grave as to be corrupted therein. St. PAUL quotes the same remarkable Passage from the Royal Prophet, and reasons upon it, ACTS xiii. 36, 37. *Wherefore he saith also, in another Psalm, Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy-One*

Holy-One to see Corruption: For DAVID, after he had served his own Generation, fell asleep, and was laid to his Fathers, and saw Corruption; but he whom God raised again saw no Corruption: This is another Consideration, proving the great Weight and Moment of this Article of our Faith, namely, that the Apostles of our Lord were chosen more especially to bear their united Witness and Testimony to this Truth.

3dly, The vast Importance of it further appears from this Consideration, that it is the principal Ground of our *Justification in the Sight of God.* 'Tis from the *Death* of our Lord that our Hope of the Remission of Sins begins; but our Hope would be immediately suppress'd unless we regard him as *Risen from the Dead.* Without this, Faith in him would be vain and groundless. Christ died for our Sins, and in our stead: How do we know that he accomplished what he undertook? This we know by his RESURRECTION. He died to make Expiation and Atonement for the Sins of the World, to make Reconciliation for Iniquity: When God raised him up, and discharged him from the Prison of the Grave, he gave a publick Declaration, that what he had done in dying for our Sins was a sufficient Expiation, and therefore 'tis said to be a *Sacrifice of a sweet-smelling Savour,*
highly

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highly acceptable to God. He was the Propitiation for our Sins, and not for our Sins only, but for the Sins of the whole World, for he gave himself a Ransom for all, and tasted Death for every Man. When God released him from the Grave, he declared to all that what our Saviour did in dying for us was sufficient to procure Justification for all those who will repent sincerely, and believe in him, with all their Hearts, who is the Propitiation; and thus, by Faith in his Blood, we gain the Remission of Sins. With the greatest Propriety, therefore, does the Author to the HEBREWS style the Blessed God *The God of Peace*, when he exerted his Power in Christ's Resurrection: HEBREWS xiii. 20. *The God of Peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant, &c.* The Doctrine of our Lord's Resurrection, therefore, must be of the greatest Moment and Importance; for without this, Faith in him would be vain and most absurd. Agreeably to this, the Scriptures put the main Stress and Emphasis on this. See ROMANS viii. 34, *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again.* So in Chap. iv. 25, *Who was delivered for our Offences, and was raised again for our Justification.* God raised him up, and gave him Glory, that our Faith and Hope might

might be in God. When PETER had insisted on the Doctrine of our Lord's RESURRECTION, and that he was ordained to be the Judge of all, he adds, in the 43d Verse of the Chapter wherein is the Text, *To him give all the Prophets Witness, that, through his Name, whosoever shall believe in him, shall receive the Remission of Sins.* Our Hope of Justification and the Remission of Sins takes its Original from the Death of our Saviour, who died for our Sins: But how do we know that he made a valuable and sufficient Atonement? This we know by his RESURRECTION. Without carrying on our View and Regard to this, we could have no solid Hope of obtaining such a Favour and Privilege, but should be, as the Apostle expresses it, *yet in our Sins*; but now God is the God of Peace.

4thly, The vast Importance of this Doctrine, and of a stedfast Belief of it, appears hence, that it is the Foundation upon which our Hope of a Resurrection to immortal Life is built. To this Purpose we may observe how the Apostle reasons in his Epistle to the CORINTHIANS, in the 15th Chapter. Some in that Church had entertained the Principles of Infidelity, whilst they denied the Possibility of the Resurrection, and the Doctrine of a future State of Recompence. To prove
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the Possibility of it, which some doubted of, or denied, he argues from *Christ Risen from the Dead*. If there could be no Resurrection of the Body when the Separation by Death is made; if this be an Impossibility in the Nature of Things, and exceeds the Power of God; then it would necessarily follow, that *Christ is not risen: And if he be not risen, Faith in him is vain; and all those who have died in the Faith and Hope of a Resurrection to immortal Life and Happiness are perished; that is, by Death they are utterly annihilated, and their Being is extinguished. These Absurdities, he observes, must necessarily follow the Denial of the Doctrine and Fundamental Article of the Resurrection of our Saviour. In Opposition to such a Principle of Infidelity, he asserts this Truth, Now is Christ risen from the Dead, and become the First Fruits of them that sleep. He observes, that they above all others should be in a most wretched and deplorable State and Condition if they were cut off from the Hope and Prospect of immortal Life and Happiness: If in this Life only we have Hope, we are of all others most miserable. To quit and renounce all Earthly Honours and Dignities; and not only so, but to be exposed to all Kinds of Sufferings and Persecutions; to live daily in danger of the most violent Deaths that enraged Enemies can invent; and, after this, to be*

be deprived of all the *Hopes of Immortality*, would clearly shew such to be the most wretched and miserable of the whole Human Race: But, on the other hand, the Christian, who hath a rational and well-established Faith of this Doctrine, and a sure Hope of a future State of Blessedness, cannot be miserable in any State. Now, that Doctrine which administers such Hope, must be of the greatest Moment and Value: And what is it that gives this Hope but the RESURRECTION of our Saviour? See I. PETER i. 3. 4. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively Hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, to an Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven.* Where you see that the Christian's having this *lively Hope*, or the Hope of immortal Life, and of the incorruptible, undefiled, never-fading Inheritance, is ascribed to our Lord's Resurrection. This is the *First-Fruits*, and he is called *the First-born from the Dead*; not that he was the first who was ever raised from the Dead, for we read of one who was raised by ELIJAH, another by ELISHA, and our Lord raised LAZARUS from the Grave; but these were raised so as to die again; but our Saviour was risen to *immortal Life*, never to be subject to the Dominion of

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Death

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Death any more. Thus he spake himself, *I am he that was dead, and behold I live for evermore.* He was the *first* who rose by his own Power, and who hath given assured Hope to his Servants of being raised in Conformity to him. *He shall,* says the Apostle, *change our vile Bodies, and make them like to his own glorious Body, according to the mighty Working whereby he is able to subdue all Things to himself:* Well, then, might he say, *I am the Resurrection, and the Life; he that believeth in me shall not die, that is eternally.* Tho' the Separation between Soul and Body must be made, yet there shall be a Re-union of both; and thus shall they who believe in Christ, and die united to him as their Head, be raised to the Possession of immortal Life and Blessedness. May not this give us a rational Explication of what the Apostle says, that *Christ abolished Death;* that is, by dying in our Stead, delivered us from the tormenting Fears of Death, which would otherwise have for ever triumphed over the Human Race, and by his Resurrection from the Dead, breaking the Power of Death, rising as a glorious Conqueror over it, he hereby brought *Life and Immortality to light;* so that *tho' in Adam we all died, in Christ we are made alive.* By Man came Death; by Man came also the Resurrection from the Dead.

Thus

Thus I have sufficiently demonstrated the great Importance of this essential Article of our Faith. The Apostle, in his 2d Epistle to TIMOTHY, ii. 16. 17. 18. cautions against paying any the least Regard to those who would subvert and undermine this fundamental Doctrine. He calls their Discourses *prophane and vain Babblings*, for that *they will encrease to more Ungodliness, their Words and corrupt Reasonings will eat as doth a Canker; of whom is HYMENEUS and PHILETUS, who concerning the Truth have erred, saying, that the Resurrection is past already, and overthrow the Faith of some.* They maintained that all the Doctrine of the Resurrection consisted in raising a Sinner, dead in Trespases and Sins, from his spiritual Death in Sin, to a Life of Virtue and Holiness; thus interpreting the Doctrine of the Resurrection, they said it was past already, and overthrew the Faith of the Resurrection of the Body to immortal Life. And the Apostle, in that fore-quoted Chapter to the *Corinthians*, plainly tells them that such corrupt Communications would vitiate their Morals, for if they once brought themselves to believe that there would be no Resurrection, no future State of Recompence, this would open the Door to all Licentiousness, or, as he expresses it, lead to Ungodliness. The natural Inference they would make would be this, *Let us eat and*

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drink, for To-morrow we shall die, and then be as though we had never had any Existence. They, therefore, who call this Doctrine into Question, who first begin to doubt, and at length to deny it, do, as our Saviour told the unbelieving SADDUCEES, greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God; for why should it be thought a Thing incredible, that a God of Omniscience and Omnipotence, who at first created all Things out of nothing, should raise the Dead?

I proceed now to make some practical Improvement of this Discourse.

1st, Let none of Christ's Disciples be ashamed to own their Fath in a crucified Saviour; for though he suffered so ignominious a Death, yet he was raised by the Power of God. What though the Author of our holy Religion suffered so shameful a Death by the Hands of ungrateful unbelieving Sinners? This ought not to diminish our Thoughts of him, or depreciate him in our Esteem; but we ought rather to have the most admiring Sentiments of his Mercy and Goodness towards us, that he would thus voluntarily abase himself as to suffer the acute, the lingering, and ignominious Death of the Cross for our sakes, and for our Recovery and Redemption

Redemption from eternal Death. We may, therefore, well *glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus*, for God hath for ever wiped off the Ignominy thereof by his Resurrection; he hath freed him from all those Aspersions that were thrown upon him, his Doctrine, and Miracles, thus *God glorified his Son*.

2dly, Since God hath raised our Saviour from the Dead, and hereby given his Servants and Disciples the sure Hope of immortal Life, and Happiness to be enjoyed in the Re-union of Soul and Body, let all of this Character by Profession live and act worthy of their Faith and Hope. 'Tis not sufficient to have the *speculative* Belief of this weighty Truth, or to be able to *answer all Gainsayers* and Opposers, tho' it will be no small Satisfaction to be able to *give the Reason of the Faith and Hope which is professed*; yet this Knowledge in the *Theory* will not be of any saving Advantage; there must be a *rising from the Death of Sin to the Life of Righteousness*. As Christ was *raised again by the Glory*, that is, by the glorious Power, of the *Father*, so we must *walk in Newness of Life*; our Hearts and Affections must be raised from Earth to Heaven, from the Love and Power of Sin. What can be more unsuitable or inconsistent than to believe that Christ is risen from the Dead, and to profess the
Hope

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Hope of a glorious Resurrection to immortal Life by virtue of his, and yet still to have our Hearts adhering and cleaving to Earthly Things? See how the Apostle reasons with the believing COLOSSIANS, and enforces an heavenly Temper and Conversation on them by this very Consideration, COLOSSIANS iii. 1, 2. *If ye then be risen with Christ, if from the Resurrection of Christ, your Head and Saviour, you who are the Members of his mystical and spiritual Body and Church, derive your Hopes of a Resurrection to eternal Life by virtue of your Union to him by Faith; it follows, seek those Things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the Right Hand of God: Set your Affections on Things above, not on Things on the Earth. Verse the 4th, When Christ who is our Life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in Glory. The Death of Christ, if we rightly consider and meditate on the End and Design of it, will engage all to mortify their Sins; and his Resurrection will engage to a heavenly Temper and Conversation. See how the Apostle argues to this Purpose, ROMANS vi. 5, 6. If we have been planted together in the Likeness of his Death, we shall be also in the Likeness of his Resurrection; knowing this, that our old Man is crucified with him, that the Body of Sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve Sin. The Death of our Lord should*
excite

excite us to crucify the Flesh, with its Affections and Lusts, and to die to Sin, as he died for it; and since he is risen by the Power of God, we should be raised in our Hearts from Earthly, and have them fixed on Spiritual Things, and invisible eternal Objects. He who is crucified with Christ by dying to Sin, will rise with him to Newness of Life. Such will be daily endeavouring to make a *practical* Improvement of their Lord's Death and Resurrection; desirous of knowing more of Christ's dying Love, and his living Power; that by the former they may weaken and destroy Sin, and by the latter be quickened to a Spiritual Life. This was the Endeavour and Prayer of the great Apostle St. PAUL, *Philip. iii. 10. That he might know him, the Power of his Resurrection, and the Fellowship of his Sufferings, being made conformable to his Death.* No Person had better Improvements in this practical Knowledge than he, yet none more desirous of *still* making greater. Who can conceive the Glory, Honour, and Power of our risen and exalted Saviour? A Ray of his Glory struck persecuting SAUL and his Company to the Ground. When St. JOHN saw him, he fell at his Feet as dead; he laid his Right Hand on him, that is, he supported and strengthened his frail Nature, and said, *Fear not, I am the first, and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead,*

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dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the Keys of Hell and of Death ; that is, all Power in the invisible World of Spirits, REVELA. i. 17, 18. Christ being raised from the Dead, dieth no more ; Death hath no more Dominion over him : For in that he died, he died to or for Sin once ; but in that he liveth, he liveth to God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed to Sin, but alive to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus you see how the Apostle teaches all Christians to make the proper Use of Christ's Death and Resurrection ; and they who do so, by the Assistance of the Holy Spirit, shall be entitled to, and fitted for, a Resurrection to eternal Life and Happiness : For if the Spirit of him who raised up Christ from the Dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the Dead shall also quicken our mortal Bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us.

Finally, this Doctrine may well fill the Hearts of Christ's Disciples with Joy and Hope. The Disciples were glad when they saw the Lord risen from the Dead ; and there is sufficient Ground for the most reviving Hope and Joy to be derived from it : This gives a sure Foundation for the Hope of the everlasting Inheritance of Glory. If the Thoughts and Belief of Christ dying for
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our Sins administers Hope of the Remission of Sins, surely the Belief of his Resurrection may, and ought to, strengthen our Hope. This will alleviate all the Burdens of Life, and allay the Horrors of the Grave, and give *Joy unspeakable and full of Glory*. It has been thought that it was common with the Primitive Christians to comfort their Brethren, when any way disconsolate, by putting them in remembrance of their Lord's RESURRECTION. Let it be our constant Care to act so that there may be an Harmony and an Agreement between our *Faith* and our *Præctice*. Let us make the same Improvement that the Apostle does, & exhorts others to do, after he had treated of our Lord's Resurrection, and the Certainty of the Resurrection of those who sleep in him: *My beloved Brethren, be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.*



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Of the Effusion of the Holy Ghost
after Christ's Ascension.

ST. JOHN vii. 39.

*But this spake he of the Spirit,
which they that believe on him
shall receive; for the Holy Ghost
was not yet given, because that
Jesus was not yet glorified.*

THESE Words are the Evangelist's
Comment upon the preceding Dis-
course of our Saviour to the Jews, and
therefore it will be necessary, in order to have
the right Understanding of them, to consi-
der what it was that gave the first Occasion
to them. The two foregoing Verses will
demand our Consideration; *In the last Day,
that great Day of the Feast, Jesus stood, and
cried, If any Man thirst, let him come unto me
and drink. He that believeth on me, as the
Scripture hath said, out of his Belly shall flow
Rivers*

Rivers of Living Water. That Feast of the JEWS which is here intended was that which is called *The Feast of Tabernacles*, and was celebrated eight Days in Remembrance of their Forefathers living in Tents forty Years in the Wilderness. That this was the particular Feast appears by the second Verse of this Chapter. Our Lord ordered his Disciples to go up to the Celebration of this Feast. He would not immediately attend them, but purposed before the End of it to be with them, Verse the 8th: The Reason he gives was, for that the JEWS *sought to kill him*, Ver. 1 & 19. Soon after his Brethren were gone up, he went up also to the Feast, not openly but as it were in secret, that he might avoid the Snare, and defeat the pernicious Scheme and Design formed against him, Verse 10. *About the Midst of the Feast Jesus went up into the Temple and taught.* And in the last, which is called *the great Day of the Feast*, the JEWS were wont to go, with great Solemnity and Joy, to draw Water from the Fountain of SILOAM, and bring it to the Temple, singing those Words of the Prophet ISAIAH (xii. 3.) *With Joy shall ye draw Water out of the Wells of Salvation*; wherein there may be an Allusion to the Condition of the ISRAELITES in the Wilderness; being parched with Thirst, they were greatly refreshed and de-

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lighted with those Waters which God graciously and miraculously gave them in that dry and barren Land. The first and the last of the Days wherein the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated were to be kept holy by religious Assemblies and Sacrifice. We have the Divine Injunction for this Feast in LEVITICUS xxiii. 35, 36, *On the first Day shall be an holy Convocation; ye shall do no servile Work therein. Seven Days shall ye offer an Offering made by Fire unto the Lord: On the Eighth, that is, on the last Day, shall be an holy Convocation to you, &c.* Our Saviour calls the last *the great Day of the Feast*, because the JEWS were wont to draw Water from the Fountain of SILOAM, and bring it to their Priests, who poured it on the Altar with the Wine of their Sacrifices: And while they, in a religious Manner, presented their Offerings to God, they expected some *Afflatus* or *Inspiration of the Holy Ghost*. Our Lord at this Time of their Solemnity invites all those who *thirsted* for, and ardently desired, the sacred Influences of the blessed Spirit, to *come to*, viz. to believe in, *him*; assuring them that they should thus have all their spiritual Wants supplied; *If any Man thirst, let him come to me and drink.* The Meaning of which Passage is this: Whoever amongst you who are so intent on drawing Water from the Fountain of SILOAM, hoping,

ping, whilst thus employed, to receive the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, if you really desire this Divine Favour and Blessing, come to, and believe in, me, and you shall receive the Holy Ghost, and that not sparingly, but in a very abundant and plentiful Measure: *He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his Belly shall flow Rivers of Living Waters.*

In order to our having a right Understanding of our Lord's Design and Intention, it must be observed, that the sacred Scriptures frequently represent the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit by the Metaphor and Similitude of *Water*, on the account of its great Usefulness, and its refreshing, cooling, and purifying Quality. There are various Places to confirm this. See ISAIAH xliv. 3. *I will pour on him that is thirsty Water, and Floods on the dry Ground; which is immediately explained, I will pour my Spirit on thy Seed, and my Blessing on thy Offspring.* See also EZEKIEL xxxvi. 25, 26, *Then, says the Almighty, I will sprinkle clean Water on you, and ye shall be clean; from all your Filthiness, and from all your Idols will I cleanse you: A new Heart also will I give unto you, and a new Spirit will I put within you; which is explained in the following Words, I will put my Spirit within you.* See also that remarkable

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ble Place, ISAIAH lv. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the Waters.* The same Metaphor is used in the New Testament, Revela. xxii. 17. *Let him that is a-thirst come; and whosoever will, let him come, and take of the Waters of Life freely.* Thus our Lord addressed himself to the JEWS, and gave Encouragement to all humble devout Worshipers among them to expect the gracious Influences of the Holy Spirit by believing in HIM. The same Similitude is made use of by our Saviour in his Discourse with the Woman of Samaria, St. JOHN iv. 14. *Whosoever shall drink of the Water that I shall give him shall never thirst: But the Water that I shall give him shall be in him a Well of Water springing up into Everlasting Life.* That we might not be in any Doubt about the Meaning of our Saviour in this Discourse, the Evangelist hath given us his Comment upon and Interpretation of it: *But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.* I shall treat on these Words in the following Order.

- I. *Prove, by several Quotations from the Antient Prophets, that God promised to pour out abundantly of his Spirit after the Advent and Appearing of the MESSIAH, the Saviour of Mankind.*
- II. *That*

II. *That during his Abode on Earth, or before his Ascension to Heaven, and Glorification at the Right Hand of God, the Holy Ghost was not given. I shall explain this, and solve the Difficulty that arises from hence.*

III. *That after his Ascension and Glorification, the Holy Ghost was given, not only to the Apostles, but to other Believers also; and that by this plentiful Effusion of the Holy Ghost the Prophecies were fulfilled, the Promise our Saviour gave before his Ascension was accomplished, and his Character of the Messiah and Saviour of the World was freed from all Doubt and Suspicion.*

IV. *Make some practical Use and Improvement.*

I. I observe, that God, by the Antient Prophets, foretold that the Holy Spirit should be poured out abundantly after the Advent and Appearance of the promised Messiah. Our Lord doth not here quote any one particular Passage from the Prophets which spake of such an Effusion of the Holy Spirit, but in general, *he that believeth on me, as the Scripture saith: Hereby leaving all intelligent Readers and Observers of the Writings*
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of the Prophets to find out in them what relates to this Subject, and at the same Time intimating, that not only one but several of them have predicted this. Some very considerable Passages to this Purpose I have already mention'd, particularly those in ISAIAH and EZEKIEL, in both which the Holy Spirit's Influence on the Souls of Men is represented by the Similitude of Water refreshing the parched Ground, quenching a raging tormenting Thirst, cleansing the Body of any Pollution. But since our Saviour in a general Way affirms that *the Scripture saith this*, it will be proper and necessary to see what some other Prophets have foretold of this. See ZECHARIAH xiv. 8. Treating of Christ's Coming and Kingdom, the Prophet hath these remarkable Words, *In that Day Living Waters shall go out from Jerusalem.* In the former Chapter he predicts the Death of the MESSIAH, whereby *a Fountain should be opened to the House of David, and to the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, for Sin and for Uncleanness*, he mentions, by the Spirit of Prophecy, what the Consequence should be with reference to the Disciples of our Lord, whom he stiles *the Shepherd*, when he should *be smitten, the Sheep should be scattered.* And we know that the Event confirmed this: For, through Fear, they all forsook him, and fled. After he had prophesied of
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the MESSIAH's Death, he very naturally discourses of his Kingdom, and of those *Living Waters*, that is, the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, which should be conferred on Believers; wherein he uses the same metaphorical Way which is used by other Prophets before-mention'd. These *Living Waters* should go out from *Jerusalem*; and we know that our Saviour ordered his Apostles to wait at *Jerusalem* till he should send to them the promised Spirit, and endow them with Power from on high. I shall only mention one remarkable Prophecy of this Effusion of the Holy Ghost, which is so very express and clear, that there will be no Necessity to quote any more, JOEL ii. 28, 29. *It shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out my Spirit on all Flesh, &c.* This famous Prophecy St. PETER quotes when he disputed against the unbelieving JEWS, and affirms, that by the Effusion of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost it was accomplished and fulfilled. This is sufficient to prove, that the Antient Prophets predicted that there should be, after the Advent and Appearing of the Messiah and Saviour, a very great and plentiful *Pouring out of the Holy Spirit on those that should believe.* 'Tis not to be doubted but that the Prophets had some Measure of the Holy Ghost *before* Christ's Coming; for it was *by his Inspiration* they wrote what they foretold

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of his DEATH, RESURRECTION, and GLORIOUS KINGDOM. This we ought alway to remember and believe, that we may not look on or regard their Writings as common or human Works or Writings; but, as *the Word of God*, receive them with great Veneration and Reverence. II. PETER, i. 21. *Prophecy came not in Old Time by the Will of Man, but holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* And St. PAUL affirms, that *all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, &c.* In various Ways, and by Degrees, God made known his Will to the Prophets. They prophesy'd of the Sufferings and Death of Christ, and the Glory that should follow. Among other Things contained in the Prophetical Writings this is one of the most weighty and considerable, that after the Messiah's Appearing the Holy Ghost should be poured out in a very abundant Measure. But then 'tis necessarily to be supposed that those who should be Partakers of the Holy Ghost should be Believers in Christ, acknowledge him to be the promised Saviour, and that his Character and Doctrine were Divine. Add to this, our Lord himself, during his Abode on Earth, gave a very clear and express Promise, that after his Ascension he would send the Holy Ghost on his Apostles, and other Believers in him. JOHN Baptist, our Lord's Fore-runner, was sent to *prepare*
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the Way for him. He invited the People to *repent* of and forsake their Sins, that they might be fitted and qualified to be the Subjects of the Messiah's Spiritual Kingdom, and partake of the Blessings thereof. This was the Doctrine he enforced and recommended, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* The Gospel is often in the New Testament called *the Kingdom of Heaven*: This, says he, *is at hand*; it will shortly be published by Christ himself: See that you not only confess but forsake your Sins, and *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance.* They who *confessed* their Sins, and declared their *Repentance*, he received them; but at the same Time he informed them, that *he who should shortly come after him* was inconceivably more worthy, and that he should *baptise them with the Holy Ghost, and with Fire*, MATTHEW iii. 11. This, no doubt, was a Reference to what followed our Lord's Ascension to Heaven, when the Holy Ghost was poured out on the Apostles, and *there appeared to them Cloven Tongues like as of Fire, and sat on each of them.* Our Saviour, before his Death, and after his Resurrection, clearly promised this. When he discoursed of his Passion and Death, and also of his Ascension, his Disciples were full of Sorrow, hearing that he should shortly leave them. But he comforted their dejected and disconsolate Minds,

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by assuring them that it was for their Benefit and Advantage that he should go away: That he would send the Holy Ghost, whose internal Presence would abundantly supply his Absence; and that the Design of his going from them to Heaven was to *prepare Mansions* and Habitations of Glory for them; and that, when they should be fitted to be received into those blissful Mansions, he would come again and receive them to himself. In the mean time he would have them cast off all Anxiety and Sorrow, and all unbelieving Fears: *Let not your Hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid*; and believe in God your Heavenly Father who is faithful in fulfilling his Promises; *believe in me*, that I shall certainly take care of you tho' absent, JOHN xiv. 1, 2. He frequently repeats this Promise of sending the Holy Ghost, that he might effectually banish Sorrow from their drooping Minds. After his Resurrection from the Dead he gave his Apostles the same Promise, ACTS i. 3, 4. He ordered them *not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the Promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptised with Water, but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many Days hence*; that is, you shall be abundantly supplied with the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghost not long after my Ascension. At the 8th Verse,
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Ye shall receive Power after that the Holy Ghost is poured out on you ; and ye shall be Witnesses to me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost Parts of the Earth. To the same Purpose see LUKE xxiv. 49. And behold, I send the Promise of my Father upon you : But tarry ye in Jerusalem till ye be endowed with Power from on high : Which Promise was given immediately before his Ascension, as appears by the Words following. Not only was this Promise given to the Apostles, but to others also who should believe on his Name : These Signs shall follow them that believe, says our Lord : In my Name shall they cast out Devils ; they shall speak with new Tongues, or in Dialects which they had never learned : they shall take up Serpents, and if they drink any deadly Thing it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay their Hands on the Sick and they shall recover ; MARK xvi. from the 17th to the 19th Verse. Moreover, our Lord's Words, commented on by the Evangelist, sufficiently prove this, This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive. I proceed in the second Place,

II. To explain these Words before me, that the Holy Ghost was not given till Jesus was glorified ; and to solve the Difficulty that offers itself. For, it may be inquired,
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Was not the Holy Ghost given to the Apostles before Jesus ascended, and was glorified? How was it they perform'd Miracles, and did such extraordinary Things in the Name of Christ? Was it not by a Power derived from the Spirit of God? Do we not read, that when he called the Twelve Disciples, he *gave them Power against unclean Spirits to cast them out, and to heal all Manner of Sickneses and Diseases*, MATTHEW X. 1. And having thus authoris'd and impowered them, he said, *Go preach, saying, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; heal the Sick, cleanse the Lepers, raise the Dead, cast out Devils*, Ver. 7th & 8th: And do we not often read that they perform'd such miraculous Works as these? How then is it here said, that the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified? This, at first View, may appear to be a material Difficulty. In order to explain this Place, and solve this Difficulty, some have said, that the Holy Ghost was not given *visibly* till after our Lord's Ascension and Glorification; *then* he appeared to them in Cloven Tongues, like as of Fire. But this seems to me to be too weak an Answer to so great a Difficulty, and is rather *evading* than *solving* or *removing* it. The best Solution, I apprehend, we shall have by making a Distinction between those Gifts of the Spirit which the Apostles had

had during our Lord's Abode on Earth, and those of a *new* and *different* Nature, with which they were furnished *after* his Ascension. If any should ask, What *new* Gifts had the Apostles after our Lord was glorified which they were not *before* possessed of? I answer, Those Gifts of the Holy Ghost, which the Apostles, and other Believers, were made Partakers of after Jesus was glorified, were of a vastly *different* Kind from what they had before; and, in this Sense, it might be said, that the Holy Ghost was not given till Jesus had all Power in Heaven and Earth, or was glorified. In order to illustrate this, there is Need only to make one very obvious and clear Distinction between the *Gifts of the Spirit*. Tho' both of them were extraordinary, supernatural, and miraculous, yet the *one* Sort of these Gifts may be called *external*, the other *internal*. The *former* Sort the Apostles had during our Lord's Continuance on Earth; that is, the Power of working Miracles: But the *internal* Gifts of the Spirit they were not endowed with till Jesus was glorified; such as the Gift of Tongues, or an Ability of speaking all Languages; the Gift of discerning Spirits, and of Prophecy. Their Understandings were illuminated in the Knowledge of many important Matters and Subjects, which they were ignorant of before. This Distinction
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will give a good Explication of these Words under Consideration, and makes the Difficulty, which at first View may seem insuperable, immediately to vanish. The Apostles of our Lord, having his Commission, did many miraculous Works in his Name; but still they had a very small Measure of *Knowledge*, or *internal Wisdom*. They understood not the Nature of his *Kingdom*, tho' he told them it *was not of this World*. Still they maintained to the last Moment of his Life the Hopes of his erecting a *Temporal Kingdom*, and of their having great Honours and Preferments. They were so full of Prejudices against the Heathens, that they could not bear to hear anything of their being admitted to the same Favours of Heaven with themselves. This Distinction entirely solves the Difficulty which naturally arises in the Mind in reading these Words. The Gifts which they had *during our Lord's Abode on Earth* were of such a Nature as enabled them to perform miraculous Operations, such as, to raise the Dead, heal the Sick, cure the most inveterate Distempers, cleanse the Lepers, &c. But the Gifts conferred on them *after our Lord's Ascension and Glorification* were of a new and different Nature: They tended to *enlighten* their *Minds*. They, who were before *illiterate*, were of a *sudden* instructed in all Kinds of Languages; where-
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by they were capable of preaching the Gospel to Persons of all Nations in their different Dialects. They had the Gift of discerning Spirits; which they had not before: For, though they had in their own Company a vile Traitor, they knew him not to be so: But when the *Holy Ghost* was poured out on them we find how quickly St. PETER detected the Artifice and Dissimulation of ANANIAS and SAPPHIRA. ACTS X. 44, 45, 46, when the Gentiles in CORNELIUS'S House began to speak with Tongues, that is, to be endowed with this Gift of speaking such Languages as they had never learnt, 'tis said, that *the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the Word, and on the Gentiles was poured out the Gift of the Holy Ghost*; which demonstrates, what was before observ'd, that this was not peculiar to the Apostles, but was conferr'd also on other Believers. That which seems peculiarly to belong to the Apostles was this, a Power of conferring the Gifts of the Spirit by the laying on of their Hands.

If it should be further inquired, In what Sense the Holy Ghost was given *after* Jesus was glorified in which he was not given *before*? I answer: He was given after Christ's Ascension to be a Comforter. 2dly, To confirm and establish their Minds. 3dly, To

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be a Monitor. And 4thly, To be our Lord's Advocate.

1st, He was given to be a *Comforter*. The Apostles had not such an immediate Occasion for him in *this* Quality while Christ was personally with them; but when he talked to them of his going to the Father, and so of leaving them in a World of Temptations, wherein they should meet with Tribulations, and the most ungrateful Treatment, they were very sorrowful: But he assured them that he would *send the Comforter*, who should abide in and with them, and fill them with divine Consolations, and with new Powers to qualify and dispose them for the most difficult Work he should call them to.

2dly, When Jesus was glorified the Holy Ghost was given to confirm their Minds, and fortify them for enduring the greatest Trials and Persecutions, and to inspire them with Courage and an undaunted Boldness in asserting and maintaining the Truth. Thus they were endowed *with Power from on high*: They, who were before timorous, and betrayed their Weakness and Fear, (when their Lord was apprehended all forsook him, and PETER, who was most sanguine and warm in his Resolutions of dying for him rather than he would deny him, when brought to the

the Trial he most scandalously denied his Lord: They who were before thus fearful of Danger) were, after this Effusion of the Holy Ghost, armed with *new* Powers, and appear to be other Sort of Men. They were now prepared to own Christ and his Cause before their most bitter and inveterate Adversaries. They, who before shewed their Frailty and Weakness, were now strengthened with Might by the Spirit of God to all Long-suffering and Patience with Joyfulness, and would not decline appearing before the Tribunals of their blood-thirsty Enemies. When they were ordered to speak no more in the Name of Christ, they boldly answered, *Whether it be right in the Sight of God to obey God or Man judge ye.* They were ready to answer in Vindication of the Truth before the Jewish Sanhedrim, or the Heathen Tribunals. They were endowed with an invincible Courage and Magnanimity. This Spirit of undaunted Resolution was necessary; for if a servile Fear had prevailed in them, they would have been unfit for such arduous and difficult Service. But they who, at the first Appearance of Danger, were *before* timorous, discourag'd, and dispirited, were *now* fortified by the Spirit of God, and prepared to withstand all the Assaults of Earth and Hell. Thus, for Example, St. PETER, who before this *denied*

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his Lord, was afterwards fortified to such a surprising Degree, that he charged the Jews to their Faces with the Guilt of shedding Christ's Blood.

3dly, The Holy Ghost was not given in quality of a *Monitor* and *Instructor* till Jesus was glorified. Whatever Acts of Power they were enabled to perform, yet they were very ignorant in Matters of very great Consequence; such as, concerning the Nature of Christ's Kingdom, the calling of the Heathen World to a Participation of the Favours of Heaven, &c. During our Lord's Continuance on Earth they were, after all his divine Instructions, very ignorant: But after the Holy Ghost was poured on them their Minds were quickly illuminated; their Darknefs was dispelled; their Understandings filled with a rich Treasure of sacred Knowledge. He strengthened their Memories, and brought to their Remembrance those great important Truths which Christ had delivered. They might easily infer from one of his extraordinary Gifts what the Design was in conferring and bestowing it; I mean that of enabling them to speak all Languages. *This* was a plain Intimation that God would have his Gospel preached to *all Nations*. This is one of the most surprising Gifts; and it was of such a Nature, that all must be convinced

vindicated that there could be no Fraud exercised herein; for they were known before to be illiterate and unlearned in those Dialects. Our Saviour before his Ascension promised to send the Holy Ghost, who should be their Monitor, Instructor, and Guide, lead them into all Truth, and bring to their Remembrance whatsoever he had said unto them.

4thly, The Holy Ghost was given *after* Jesus was glorified to be an Advocate for Christ, and Vindicator of his Character, Mission, and Doctrine. 'Tis true, Christ was declared to be the Son of God with Power by the Resurrection from the Dead; but he was not shewn alive to all, and openly, but to chosen Witnesses. He therefore promised to pour on them the Holy Ghost; and when he is come, he shall reprove or convince the World of Sin, of Righteousness, and of Judgment. Of Sin, *because they believe not on me*; of Righteousness, *because I go to my Father*; of Judgment, *because the Prince of this World is judged*; JOHN xvi. 8, 9. Those wonderful Gifts, with which you shall be endowed and furnished, shall convince the World of their Sin in rejecting and crucifying me; they shall be fully sensible of my Righteousness; I suffered Death in their Esteem under the Notion of an Impostor

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postor and a Blasphemer ; but they shall be brought to acknowledge my unblemished Innocence. *When he is come he shall convince the World of Judgment, because the Prince of this World is judged ;* that is, Satan, the God of this World, shall be cast out of his Dominion. Wherever the Gospel is preached Idolatry shall cease, and he shall fall as Lightning from Heaven. Our Lord *predicts* what great Success should attend the preaching his Gospel *after* the Effusion of the Spirit of Power. This may give another good Sense of that Place, I. TIMOTHY ii. 16. *Great is the Mystery of Godliness ; God was manifest in Flesh, justified in or by the Spirit : Christ was justified, acquitted, and freed from all the Aspersions and Calumnies thrown on him, by the Spirit of God so plentifully poured out ;* for, had he not been really the Son of God and Saviour of the World, who can conceive that God would have enabled illiterate Men to do such miraculous Works in his Name, or furnish them with such extraordinary Powers, both external and internal, which demonstrated that there could be no Deceit or Guile used ? Whatever great or stupendous Works our Lord had done, he assured his Apostles, that after he should go to Heaven they should do greater Works than he himself had done. But how can this be, since our Saviour cast
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out Devils, raised the Dead, &c. ? I answer, the Works which the Apostles did were, after his Ascension, greater with regard to the *Success* that attended them ; for our Lord had *very* few Disciples and Followers ; but, soon after the Effusion of the Holy Ghost, we read of three thousand converted by St. PETER's Discourse. This leads to the third Thing proposed, namely,

III. That after Jesus ascended, and was glorified at the Right Hand of God, he fulfilled his Promise, and poured out the Gifts of his Holy Spirit on his Apostles, and enabled them to confer the like Gifts on other Believers ; and these extraordinary Gifts were continued in the Church of Christ for a considerable Time, till the Gospel had that full Confirmation and Establishment which the Wisdom of God saw fit to give it, in order to transmit it to the Faith, and recommend it to the Belief, of all future Ages. Very little need to be said on this Head : For the Completion and Accomplishment of this Promise, and so of all the other Predictions of the Ancient Prophets, we have a very particular Account in the 2d Chapter of the *Acts*, 4 first Verses. There was a vast Concourse of People of different Nations at JERUSALEM at this Time. St. PETER assured them, that now was fulfilled that remarkable

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markable Prophecy of JOEL before quoted. By his rational Discourse, and the Grace and Power of God attending it, vast Multitudes were deeply impressed with a Sense of their Guilt, brought to Repentance, and Faith in the once crucified, but risen and glorified Saviour, and were added to the Church of God. We may here observe the Wisdom and Goodness of God in the Effusion of the Holy Ghost at that particular Time, when there were such vast Numbers gathered together, that the Fame of that illustrious Miracle for the Confirmation of the Christian Doctrine might spread far and wide. See also ACTS iii. 11, 12, 13, compared with ACTS iv. 1, 2. Notwithstanding all the Attempts of Unbelievers to suppress all this Evidence for the Truth, God gave great Success to this Doctrine; for in the 4th Verse we read, that *the Number of them who believed was about five thousand*; and at the 31st Verse we read of another Effusion of the Holy Ghost, which seems very probable was on those who, on that great Occasion there mentioned, were assembled together. These extraordinary Gifts were continued in the Church for a considerable Time; whereby the Kingdom of Satan was almost demolished, and the Gospel of our Redeemer was vastly propagated, and spread every where. No Church was more famous for these miraculous

raculous Gifts than that of CORINTH: See the 12th Chapter of the 1st Epistle, from the 4th to the 12th Verse.

I shall now make some Improvement of this Discourse; and

1st, It seems hence evidently to follow, that the *unpardonable Sin* of Blasphemy against the HOLY GHOST *could not* be committed till JESUS was glorified; for till *that Time* He was not *given*. If the Distinction between the Gifts of the Spirit before-mentioned be admitted (and I cannot see how it can be denied), then it will follow, that it was not possible that any, during our Saviour's Abode on Earth, could, in the full and proper Sense, be guilty of this *unpardonable Sin*. They who attributed the Miracles our Lord, done by the Spirit of God, to a Combination and Confederacy with *Evil Spirits*, were no doubt guilty of a very heinous Sin: Moreover, this carried in it the grossest Absurdity; for, since our Saviour's Doctrine manifestly tended to undermine and destroy *the Devil's Kingdom*, if he should have Power from *Satan* to do his miraculous Works, it would necessarily follow that *Satan* did lend his Assistance to destroy and subvert *his own Kingdom & Interest*. Though, therefore, they shewed great *Malice*, and
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asserted the grossest and most palpable *Absurdity*, yet they could not be chargeable with *the unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost*, because HE was not *given* till Jesus was glorified. They, therefore, who had resisted all the former Evidences might, by this last and fullest, I mean *the Effusion of the Holy Ghost*, be convinced of their horrible Sin of Unbelief, and of rejecting and crucifying the Son of God; for 'tis expressly said, *when he is come, he shall convince the World of Sin*, that is, of the Guilt of Unbelief: And 'tis very probable that some of those who had been as obstinately fixed in Unbelief as any others were afterwards brought to Repentance and Faith: Consequently, they could not have committed *the unpardonable Sin*. But if, *after* the Effusion of the Holy Ghost, any should go on to blaspheme, their Sin would be unpardonable. If they should trample under foot the Son of God, and *count the Blood of the Covenant an unholly Thing*; if they should say that the Blood of Christ, whereby the Covenant of Grace was sealed and confirmed, was the Blood of an Impostor and Malefactor, and offer Despite to the Spirit of Grace, they who should thus sin wilfully *after* they have received the Knowledge of the Truth, *there would remain no more Sacrifice for Sin*; there Sin is unpardonable, HEBREWS x. 26, 29.

2dly,

2dly, Since Jesus is ascended and glorified let none be ashamed to own themselves his Disciples ; but glory and rejoice herein, and in the Hope of beholding his Glory, and of being for ever with him. *He humbled himself, and became obedient to Death, even the Death of the Cross; wherefore God hath highly exalted him.* He who was for a short Time made a little lower than the Angels, by assuming our Nature, which is inferior to the Angelical, as the Reward of his voluntary and deep Abasement, is now glorified in our Nature, and hath Power superior to all the Angels in Heaven. It was the Prospect of this Honour and Glory that supported him in his unparaleted Agonies : This was *the Joy that was set before him*, See HEBREWS xii. 2. When the Disciples of a once crucified, but but now risen and glorified, Saviour read the Account given of his being possessed of all Honour and Power, and also what he hath promised to them that are *faithful to the Death*, this should inspire their Souls with the noblest Resolutions of maintaining their Fidelity to him in a Course of *active Obedience*, and with an invincible Courage of dying for him rather than to deny him ; and with ardent Desires of *beholding his Glory*, and of *entering into the Joy of their Lord*. He will at the last Day appear in his own and in his Father's Glory ; every Eye shall

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see him; all Nations shall be gathered before him, and receive their final definitive Sentence from him, according to their *Works*.

3dly, Let us be thankful to God for the sanctifying and renewing Influences of the BLESSED SPIRIT, which, with regard to our everlasting Welfare and Happiness, are of more Value and Usefulness than all the extraordinary *Gifts of the Spirit*. These *latter* Sort have long since ceased; the End and Design for which they were bestown being fully answered; which was, to give an abundant Confirmation to the Christian Faith throughout all future Ages. But though *these* are ceased and withdrawn, blessed be God, his *renewing Graces* are *continued* with his Churches, and will thus *continue* whilst Christ hath a Church on Earth; a Spiritual Body, of which he is the sole King and Head, to be edified, and Saints to be perfected in Holiness and improved in Virtue. And, with reference to our Salvation and Happiness, these are vastly preferable, more valuable, and useful: For, if any in the present Day could have the same miraculous Gifts which were bestown in the early Days of Christianity. and at the same Time was devoid of the Graces of the Holy Spirit, he would, with reference to Eternity, be in a wretched and deplorable State. And that a
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Person in those Primitive Times might have the one Sort and be destitute of the other is plainly supposed by the Apostle; for, after he had discoursed largely of the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost, which the Church of CORINTH had as large a Measure of as any, that they might not glory in these, and imagine their spiritual State to be safe and secure, he, after all, exhorts them earnestly to *covet the best Gifts*; whereby he means the *renewing Graces of the Spirit*; and then immediately, in the following Chapter, discourses of the very amiable and excellent Grace of *Charity*; whereby is meant sincere *Love* to God and others. To this he gives the Preference. See how solidly he reasons, I. CORINTH. xii. 31. and xiii. 1, 2. *Though I speak with the Tongues of Men, and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal: And though I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge, &c. and have no Charity, I am nothing.* If any should secretly wish that they could obtain the same extraordinary Gifts as were conferred in the early Days of Christianity, let such know that the Graces of the Holy Spirit are vastly preferable, excellent, and necessary; for these constitute us *Christians indeed*, give a Title to the Favour of God: These enstamp a real Beauty and Excellence
on

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on the Human Mind, and qualify for Heaven and Happiness.

Finally, since the Doctrine of our Saviour hath been so abundantly confirmed *to be of God*, let us most highly value and esteem it, dread the Thoughts of renouncing this Doctrine; and let our Esteem of this our holy Religion be shewn, by *regulating our Lives* agreeable to those excellent *Laws and Precepts* which our Saviour hath given. Let us comply with the *Terms and Conditions* of Pardon and eternal Life which are proposed, and unalterably fixed; reject every Temptation to Infidelity; say, *Lord, to whom shall we go but to Thee? Thou hast the Words of eternal Life.* Read often, and meditate on, those weighty Words with which I shall conclude, HEBREWS ii. 3, 4. *How shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own Will?*



THE following SERMON was preach'd at EXON before the ASSEMBLED MINISTERS of *Devon* and *Cornwall*; and is now published at the particular Request and Desire of a very worthy Minister of the Assembly, who thinks it may be useful both to Ministers and People. Having a great Esteem of his Opinion and Judgment, I have consented to the Publication of it.

SAMUEL WESTCOTT.

ISAIAH xlix. 5.

Tho' Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the Eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my Strength.

THIS generally acknowledged that the Prophet, in this Chapter, has a reference to the MESSIAH, and his Prophetick Office; for, as St. PETER expresses himself, *The Spirit of Christ which*
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was in the Prophets testified before-hand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow. They also predicted the great Mercy and Goodness of God as well to the Gentiles as to the Jews; particularly in this Chapter, wherein the MESSIAH is called God's *Servant*, because he should assume the Human Nature, and discharge those special and extraordinary Functions and Services that were appointed; Verse the 3d, *Thou art my Servant, in whom I will be glorified.* The Prophet, in the Name of the Messiah, answers, *I have laboured in vain, and have spent my Strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my Judgment is with the Lord, and my Work with my God.* There was very small Fruit attended our Lord's Ministry among the Jews to whom he was sent. They were prepossessed with the false Notion and Hope of a *Temporal Prince and Saviour*. When they saw what mean Figure he made, and that he called them to *suffer* for the Truth, instead of *triumphing* over their Enemies, and raising them to Dignity and Honour, they despised him. This was predicted by this very Prophet, in his 53d Chapter, 2d and 3d Verses, *Now, saith the Lord, that formed thee from the Womb to be his Servant, &c. Tho' Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the Eyes of the Lord: Tho' Israel (from whom, as concerning the Flesh,*
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Christ came) rejected and scorned him and his Doctrine, and treated him in a most barbarous and ignominious Manner, yet he was *glorious in the Eyes of the Lord*: God, whom he served, and whose Work he came to do, would not despise him, but be his Strength. Tho' my Labour should be unsuccessful, he will honour and glorify me with himself. He will honour me with Success among others, even the Gentiles. He will support and strengthen me under all Difficulties and Discouragements.

The MESSIAH was appointed to be the Chief Shepherd, the Great Light of the World, who by his Doctrine should enlighten the benighted ignorant World. Tho' the Mercy and Grace of God was for a long Time confined to the Israelites, yet it was not intended to be always thus confined; but, after our Lord's Resurrection, he declared, all Power in Heaven and Earth was given to him; and therefore ordered his Apostles to *go and teach all Nations*; to make the Offer and Proposal of Salvation to all. This is particularly mention'd in the Words following the Text, where God is represented as addressing himself to the Messiah, saying, *It is a light Thing that thou shouldst be my Servant, to raise up the Tribes of Jacob, and to restore the Preserved of Israel: I will also give*
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thee for a Light to the Gentiles, that thou mayst be my Salvation to the End of the Earth. The Messiah is the sole King and Head of his Church. Under him he appointed Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists; such extraordinary Officers, who were to have none to succeed them. But, blessed be God! he gave PASTORS and TEACHERS, who are to *continue* in the Church to the Consummation of all Things, as the Design of his giving them manifestly shews; that is, *for the perfecting the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, and for the edifying the Body of Christ.* The Prophet introduces Christ as speaking of his Designation to his Prophetick Office, Ver. 2d & 3d. The Prophet, foreseeing what small Success he would have during his Personal Ministry, in the Name of the Messiah utters this just Complaint, Verse the 4th. The Event verified this; for though he gave full Evidence to all unprejudic'd Persons that he had a Divine Commission, yet so blinded and infatuated were the far greater Part of the Jews, that they would not receive him or his Doctrine.

Tho' these Words have a Primary Reference to the Messiah, the small Success he should have, and the glorious Reward he should have from God for his Fidelity in the Discharge of his Office, yet they may be considered

considered with a Reference to all the faithful Servants of God in the Ministry. So the Proposition to be considered and improved is this; “ Tho’ the faithful Servants of God in “ the Ministry may not have that Success “ which they wish, endeavour, and pray “ for, yet they shall not fail of receiving a “ glorious Reward.” Here I shall offer these three Things, as what, I apprehend, may deserve our serious Consideration.

I. *Inquire briefly into the important Design of the Sacred Function and Ministry, and shew that all faithful Ministers do earnestly wish, endeavour, and pray for Success.*

II. *What are the Causes and Reasons that such have sometimes but small Success.*

III. *That such shall not fail of a glorious Reward: Or, their not having that Success which they earnestly desir’d, and endeavour’d, shall be no Diminution of their Happiness and Glory: They shall be glorious in the Eyes of the Lord.*

I. I shall briefly inquire into the Nature and Design of the Sacred Function and Ministry, and shew that all the faithful Servants

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of God in the Ministry do earnestly wish, endeavour, and pray, for Success. In general, the Design of the Sacred Office is, to bring Sinners to Repentance, Faith, and Holiness, in order to qualify them for a State of consummate Holiness, and endless Bliss and Happiness. The Terms of Reconciliation to, and Acceptance with, God, are unalterably fixed in his Word. These must be explained to the People, and all proper Care used to guard from all Errors and Mistakes in these essential Matters: For an Error concerning the Terms and Conditions of Acceptance will be of fatal and dangerous Consequence. The Servants of God in the Ministry are obliged to represent the evil Nature of Sin, its pernicious Tendency, to shew the necessary Connection between Vice and Misery, Holiness and Happiness. They are to display the Beauties of Holiness, to shew that all the *Truths* of Christianity conduce to *Practical Religion*, and are influential on Heart and Life; without which good Effect Faith is dead, and boasting of Orthodoxy will be ineffectual to Salvation.

They are first to inform the Judgment, enlighten the Mind, and then to raise the Passions. Unless the Foundation be well laid, the highest Transports of Zeal will be *like a Morning Cloud, or an early Dew, which soon*

soon vanishes away. When the Terms of Reconciliation to God have been explained, and the Reasonableness and Necessity of complying with them been clearly represented, the most pathetick Exhortations and Intreaties must be used in persuading Sinners to be reconciled to God by sincere Repentance. The Servants of God are, to this End, to display the Riches and Greatness of God's Grace and Mercy to all penitent Sinners, his Readiness to blot out all Transgressions, however great or numerous they have been, in Consideration of the Merits of our Saviour. God is in Christ reconciling the World to himself, not imputing Trespases to any who will sincerely repent and forsake their Sins. They are also to display in the most awful Manner the Terrors of the Lord in the Day of Judgment against all those who live and die in a State of wilful Impenitence and Disobedience. Christ came *to call Sinners to Repentance*: And how can those of the Sacred Character fulfil their Ministry if they do not mind, and principally insist on, *that* for which the Redeemer came into the World? Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, were the subject Matter of St. PAUL's Discourse. They who endeavour to give right Sentiments of Religion, its amiable Nature, who make such a Representation of
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the Blessed God as tends to draw Men to love him, seek his Favour, and Communion with him; they who endeavour to convince Sinners of the Deformity, Malignity, and fatal Consequence, of wilful Sin, and that their Happiness in both Worlds depends on the Truth and Sincerity of their Repentance and Faith; they who endeavour to convince Men of the Divine Authority of the Christian Religion, that 'tis a Doctrine according to Godliness, that its Precepts and Rules are entirely consonant to right Reason, every way worthy of God, perfecting and exalting the Human Nature, conducing to make Men like God in all his moral Excellencies and Perfections, Partakers of a Divine Nature, in order to Bliss and Happiness in the Enjoyment of him; they who thus endeavour to win Souls to the Love of God and Goodness do, in the best Manner, answer the Design of this important Office. They preach Christ to the best Advantage, and to the best Purpose, who treat of the Excellence, the Reasonableness, and Divine Authority, of his Religion, and the Design of its Doctrines, Laws, and Precepts, to promote Holiness and Happiness. 'Tis impossible that any sincere Servant of Christ should be indifferent whether his Ministry be successful or no; whether he turn Sinners from the Error of their Ways, and so save them from Death and Destruction,

on, or no. When such consider the Worth and Dignity of immortal Souls, for whose Redemption and Salvation Christ died; when they consider the Awfulness and Strictness of that Accompt they must give to God; this moves them to warn Sinners of the Danger of delaying their Repentance. They will preach the Word; *be instant in Season and out of Season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all Long-suffering, and Doctrine, that they may be free from the Blood of all Men;* they are guided in their Ministrations by a Regard to the Glory of God, and by a Principle of Love to the Souls of their Hearers. As Christ came into the World with most enlarged extensive Views of Benevolence to save a World of lost Sinners, so they who have their Commission from him, and receive their Ministry in the Lord, or agreeably to the Directions of his Word, and who consider aright the vast Importance of the Trust committed to them, will do their utmost that none shall perish for Want of timely Warning and Admonition. Such will take heed to themselves, in the first Place, that whilst they preach to others they themselves may not be rejected of God; and then that none of those to whom they minister in holy Things may be lost thro' their Negligence. They who have a due Consideration of these Things will be very importunate with God
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Prayer, that his Blessing and Influence may attend their Ministrations. Thus of EPAPHRAS 'tis said, that he always laboured fervently in his Prayers for the COLOSSIANS, that they might stand perfect and compleat in all the Will of God, COLOSSIANS iv. 12.

But, after all the most proper prescribed Methods of reclaiming Sinners from the Error of their Ways have been used, how often have the Servants of Christ Reason to complain in the same mournful Accent the Prophet did, ISAIAH liii. 1. *Who hath believed our Report, and to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed?* The Consideration of this often fills their Hearts with Grief, so real and great is their Benevolence to Mankind, and their Concern for the Recovery and Salvation of Souls. Herein they manifest a merciful and compassionate Spirit and Temper, like that of their Divine Lord, who, foreseeing the dreadful Destruction which would befall the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem* for their Impenitence, Hardness of Heart, and Unbelief, expressed his deep Sorrow by Tears: ISRAEL would not be gathered tho' he used all proper Methods to win them: LUKE xix. 41. 42. When he beheld the City he wept over it, saying, *if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy Day, the Things which belong to thy Peace! But now they are*
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bid from thine Eyes, compar'd with Chap. xiii.

54. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the Prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy Chilâren, as a Hen doth gather her Brood under her Wings, but ye would not?* St. PAUL, moved with Compassion like his Saviour, wept when he thought of some who pretended to believe in a Crucified Jesus, and to hope for Salvation by him, notwithstanding they lived and acted directly contrary to the Design of his Death; *I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are Enemies to the Cross of Christ.* And have not many of the faithful Servants of Christ often Cause and Reason of complaining, and mourning, on the same Account, that after all their Endeavours to win Souls to Christ, and to gather them into his Fold, so few, comparatively, are won: They who were heretofore impenitent, rebellious, and disobedient, continue so still. — I proceed, in the second Place,

II. To consider the Reasons and Causes why the Word of God, dispensed with the united Force and Energy of Argument and Affection, is very often attended with very little Success. Among many other Reasons, I shall only mention these three; 1st, The rooted Love of Sin, allow'd and reigning in

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the Soul, hinders the Success of the Word of God. 2dly, Unbelief, or that which is equivalent to it, a formal customary Assent to the Truths of Religion. 3dly, The Want of Consideration, or a Neglect to use the Power of Reflection which God hath given.

1st, The Love of Vice, allow'd and reigning in the Soul, hinders the Success of the Word of God. This prejudices against all the Calls and Invitations to Repentance and a holy Life. Some have, by repeated Acts of Iniquity, acquired a confirm'd Habit and rooted Love to their Sins; so that they will not hear or listen to any Reproofs. This was the Reason that the Jews contemned our Saviour, and his Doctrine; which was so pure and holy that it gave no Indulgence to any of their beloved Vices. 'Twas not for Want of sufficient Evidence of its Divine Authority that any did then, or that any do now, reject the Christian Faith: The principal Reason is this, just mentioned. See St. JOHN iii. 19. *This is the Condemnation, that Light came into the World, and Men loved Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were evil.* What though the Servants of God, moved with Zeal for his Glory, and with deep Concern for the Welfare and Salvation of precious Souls, do address themselves with all the Emphasis of Reason, Argument,

gument, and Affection: Tho' they demonstrate the Baseness, Folly, Ingratitude, and Misery, that Sin involves in it, yet the Sinner, accustom'd and attach'd to his beloved Lusts and Vices, continues prejudiced and obdurate. He may for a while have some transient Thoughts and Convictions of altering his Method of living; but, as soon as the Discourse is ended, we see how quickly these slight Impressions are worn off and erased. We have a remarkable Instance to confirm this in FELIX; when PAUL *reasoned of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled*, ACTS xxiv. 25. But that sudden Terror of Mind was soon abated. Surely there was no Want of Force and Strength of Reason and Argument in his treating on these weighty Subjects; yet all the Effect of it was the raising a sudden Fear: But the Love of Sin still prevailed. There are scarce any so devoid of all Sense of Good and Evil as to say expressly that they *never* intend to repent: But they delay, and put this off, from Time to Time; and these dilatory Excuses shew that the Love of Vice is rooted in their Souls. But can any imagine that the longer they indulge themselves in sinful Courses, and evil Practices, they shall be the more willing and forward to forsake and renounce them hereafter? Will not the Love of Sin by repeated Acts be strengthen-

ed? How seldom do we find sensual Sinners, who have been for a long Time addicted and captivated to the Service of their Lusts, ever get free of this wretched Bondage and Servitude? The faithful Servants of God use the weightiest Arguments, derived from Reason and the Word of God. They represent the Baseness and Ingratitude of Sin; they prove and demonstrate that Sin is contrary to Mens true Interest; so far from conducing to their Happiness, that Vice and Misery are inseparably connected, and can never be separated. They enforce their Exhortations by displaying the great Mercy of God to all sincere Penitents. They endeavour also to persuade Men to be reconciled to God, by representing, in the most awful Manner they can, the Terrors of the Lord in the Day of Judgment; and yet we often see that the Love of Sin, rooted in the Soul, renders many impenetrable to Conviction, deaf to all the Arguments that can be offered. Since then there is so great a Difficulty in bringing those who have been long accustom'd to their beloved Vices to Repentance and Reformation, let all beware how they *barden their Hearts* a Moment longer against God's present Calls and Invitations.

2dly, Another Cause and Reason of the Unsuccessfulness of the Word of God is Unbelief;

Unbelief; or (which is equivalent to it) Mens contenting themselves with a *formal* customary Assent to the Truths of Religion. So great, momentous, and weighty, are the Arguments moving to a virtuous Life, which the Word of God and his Servants enforce, that if there was a real Belief, and serious Consideration, of them, one could scarce think it possible that any should resist, or act contrary to them. HOPE and FEAR are the two great Springs and Principles of Human Actions. What is it moves any to undertake the most daring and hazardous Enterprises but the probable *Hope* and Prospect of Gain? *Fear* also, if rightly managed and regulated, is useful, not only in the common Affairs of Life, to make Persons cautious and circumspect, but in the more important Affairs of Religion and Eternity. God in his Word hath used Arguments suitable to our Natures. He hath proposed the never-fading Glories of his Kingdom to animate our *Hope*. The stedfast Faith of invisible Felicities, their sublime Nature, and eternal Duration, would give Victory over the World with all its Temptations, and would inspire such vigorous and lively *Hope*, as would make us patient in doing and suffering the whole Will of God: For if we *hope* for these Things, then must we with Patience and Fortitude of Soul *wait* for them. In
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the Word of God also there are Threatenings of future Wrath and Vengeance denounced against the wilfully disobedient, adapted to excite and work upon the Passion of *Fear*, that Sinners might *flee from the Wrath to come*, and enquire *what they must do to be saved*. But the Felicities of God's Kingdom, and the Miseries of lost Souls, being *invisible*, have little or no Influence on the Minds of those who are carnal, and led only by a Regard to Things *visible*, and who are destitute of that *Faith* which is *the Substance of Things hoped for, the Evidence of Things not seen*. Unbelief hardens Men in a fatal Security and Presumption. There are many who content themselves with a superficial customary Assent to the great fundamental Truths and Doctrines of Religion; such as, the Existence of a God; his Providential Government; the Immortality of their Souls; and a future State of Retribution, according to Mens reigning Tempers, Dispositions, and Actions; that the future Judgment will decide their Condition, happy or miserable: And, after such a *verbal* Profession and Acknowledgment of *Faith*, are no more swayed and guided by *this Faith* than if they were *Unbelievers*. The Reason is, that they never duely considered the Nature, Importance, and Practical Tendency, of these Truths. Their Faith is a
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formal traditional Assent; not a rational active Principle. Some, 'tis to be feared, do evade the most forcible Arguments for a holy and religious Life, by entertaining some false and dangerous Notions of *justifying Faith*, and the *free Grace of God*; the *Imputation of Christ's Righteousness*, and of *unconditional absolute Decrees*. Hence many have *turned the Grace of God into Lasciviousness*; and, instead of minding what the Doctrine of the Gospel, bringing Salvation, teacheth, viz. *to deny Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts; to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World*, have indulged themselves in Acts of Impiety, Intemperance, Injustice, and Sensuality; degrading and debasing Human Nature: And yet confidently and presumptuously talk'd of their Hope of Salvation by Faith in Christ; trusting that *his* perfect Righteousness will be *imputed to them*; and, tho' they have no Righteousness or Holiness of Heart or Life, yet they shall be justified and saved by the *Grace of God*. What signifies the most awful and affectionate Calls and Invitations to Repentance and Holiness offer'd to such Persons under the Power of Unbelief, or at least in such dangerous Errors as these? The Word of God preached to such Persons does not profit them, not being mixed with Faith.

3dly, Another Cause of the Unsuccessfulness of the Word of God is the Want of Consideration, or a Neglect of using the Rational Powers God hath given. The manifest Design of the Christian Religion is to purify Mens Hearts, and reform their Lives. Whoever considers the sublime Nature of its Precepts and Promises, will soon see that the Design of Christianity is to make us Partakers of a divine Nature here, that we might be fitted for the Vision and Fruition of a God of perfect Purity, and made meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. Right Reason and the Word of God agree, that none but *the pure in Heart* can be qualified for the Happiness of the other World. None but *the pure in Heart shall see God*. What though the Ministers of Christ should make the most proper and amiable Representation of Religion, and prove clearly the Divinity of its Original, and that all the Precepts and Promises of the Christian Doctrine are calculated and intended to exalt and refine the Nature of Man; — tho' they should, in the most rational and affectionate Manner, demonstrate the Necessity of Holiness of Heart and Life, the Excellencies, Beauties, and Pleasures, of Holiness, What would all this avail, if Men will not employ those *Rational Powers* God hath given them, and which ought more especially to be exercised

cised about the most weighty, important, and necessary, Affair of their own Salvation? Surely the Neglect of considering the Arguments moving to a Religious Life must be criminal and inexcusable. *How can any escape who neglect the great Salvation?* 'Tis no Wonder that they should receive no spiritual Advantage by the Word of God who *are Hearers only*, but scarce ever meditate on what they have heard, or examine their Hearts and Lives, that they may correct and reform what is irregular. Our Lord, in his Parable of the Sower, mentions this as the Cause of the Unfruitfulness and Unsuccessfulness of the Word of God, MATTHEW xiii. 19. *When any one beareth the Word of the Kingdom, and understandeth it not, does not weigh and consider it, then cometh the Wicked-one and taketh away that which was sown in his Heart.* Another beareth the Word, and receiveth it with Joy; but not having Root in himself, not seriously meditating on and considering the Importance and Excellence of it, and consequently not understanding what was proposed, such bring forth no Fruit to Perfection, *the Cares of the World, the Deceitfulness of Riches, and the Pleasures of Life, choak the Word, and it becometh unfruitful.* But he that beareth the Word and understandeth it, which necessarily supposeth that he considereth it, *bringeth forth Fruit to*
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Perfection. What our Saviour teaches in this Parable is confirmed by Reason, and the Nature of the Thing: For how can it be expected that the most strenuous Arguments should have any Force, if they are forgotten as soon as heard? What though the Ministers of Christ should wisely adapt their Discourses to the Capacities and Circumstances of their Hearers; tho' they should with the strongest Reason display the evil and pernicious Nature of Sin, its necessary Connection with Misery here and hereafter; tho' they should discourse in the most lively and convincing Manner of the Happiness that flows from Virtue, and that Religion hath Pleasures vastly superior to all the Delights of Sense; that Things Eternal are infinitely preferable to all Things Temporal, and therefore are most worthy of the highest Esteem and Choice of all rational and immortal Beings; tho' they should demonstrate that God is an All-sufficient Good and Portion; that the whole World without him, his Favour, and Love, cannot constitute any happy; what would such a solid and rational Discourse signify to amend the Heart, or reform the Life, if, as soon as 'tis heard, it be not thought on, or weigh'd? Can any reasonably expect that God should in a miraculous irresistible Way work a Conviction in their Minds, who will not exercise the

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Rational Powers he hath given them? Would not such a Method as that just mentioned destroy the *Freedom of the Will*, which would destroy all *Religion* at once? — I proceed, in the third Place,

III. To consider that which is the great Support, Comfort, and Encouragement, to all the faithful Servants of Christ in the Ministry; viz. That Christ, the Righteous Judge of the World, will dispense and proportion his Rewards of Glory according to their *Sincerity* and *Fidelity* in his Service; and not according to their *Success*; which, for the Reasons just mentioned, may be very small. 'Tis this that revives their disconsolate Minds. They know, that though they should *labour in vain*, or with very small Success, in turning Sinners from the Error of their Ways to God, and Holiness, yet *their Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*. They know that their Judgment is with the Lord, who is not unrighteous to forget their Work, and Labour of Love, for his Name's Sake, and for the Welfare and Salvation of Souls. They serve a bountiful and most gracious Lord, who is a Witness to their unfeigned Desires, and assiduous Endeavours, to promote his Glory, and to win Souls. The Righteous Judge of the World will bestow his Rewards according to every Man's

Work & Labour, not according to their Success. No doubt it must be a very great Consolation to the Servants of God in the Ministry when they find that God hath rendered their Endeavours of turning Sinners from their pernicious Ways effectual. To be, under God, instrumental in enlightening the ignorant, and saving Sinners from Death, and the Wrath to come, is very comfortable to those who make this the great End and Design of their Ministry; who can say, like the Great Apostle, *God is my Witness, how earnestly I long after you all in the Bowels of Jesus Christ*; or, as he expresses himself with regard to the ISRAELITES, *My Heart's Desire, and Prayer to God for Israel, is, that they may be saved*. Now, when such faithful benevolent Servants of God fail of having that Success which they aim at, long for, and make the subject Matter of their Prayers, when such are herein disappointed, it would quite dispirit them, had they not this Consideration ready, and which supports their drooping dejected Minds, *viz.* That though very few are won to God and Holiness, yet they shall be glorious in the Eyes of the Lord. He whom they serve knows their Work, what they chiefly aim at, and will proportion his Rewards to the Labours of his Servants, inclusive of their *Intentions*; which, in his Judgment, adds the greatest Value to what

what is done in his Service. ENOCH, a Prophet of the Antediluvian Age, earnestly endeavour'd to reclaim Sinners from their impious and sensual Practices. He bore Testimony against the reigning Vices and abounding Iniquities of the Time, by the Holiness of his Conduct. He *walked with God*, would not *follow a Multitude to do Evil*. He also represented the Terrors of the Lord in the Day of Judgment; See the General Epistle of JUDE, Ver. 14, 15. *Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of (in the Original 'tis to) them, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten Thousand of his Saints to execute Judgment on all, &c.* Yet little or no Success attended his Doctrine, so deeply were they immersed in the Love of Sin, and of carnal Pleasures; their Hearts were hardened by Infidelity and Unbelief. But he was glorious in the Eyes of the Lord. When Examples of Vice are numerous, and Temptations strong, the contrary Virtues will alway appear with the greater Lustre and Dignity. For his singular Piety, and exemplary Holiness, he was honoured with a Translation to Heaven without tasting Death; for those who honour God, in Times of the greatest Degeneracy and Corruption, he will honour them. NOAH is expressly call'd *a Preacher of Righteousness*, II. PETER ii. 5. He also strove to turn them from their Courses of Sensuality;

Sensuality; and the Spirit of God *strove* with him; witness what God himself said, *My Spirit shall not alway strive*. NOAH was not only a Preacher of Righteousness, but an exemplary Pattern of Righteousness and strict Holiness. There was an Harmony and an Agreement between his Doctrine and his Practice; without which 'tis not to be reasonably expected that a Minister's Exhortations to Holiness will be regarded. Yet little or no Success attended his preaching and holy living, as appears by the Smallness of the Number who were saved in the Ark with him. This may give Light to the Meaning and Interpretation of that Place in I. PETER iii. 19, 20. He had just before said, that Christ was put to Death in the Flesh; but quickened, or raised to Life, by the Spirit; it follows, *by the which, that is, by which Spirit, also he went, and preached to the Spirits in Prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the Long-suffering of God waited in the Days of Noah while the Ark was preparing, wherein few, that is eight, Souls were saved by Water*. Christ, by his Spirit in NOAH, a Preacher of Righteousness to the Sinners of the old World, strove with them; but they resisted the Spirit of God, would not be reclaimed; and so for their wilful Disobedience, Impenitence, and Unbelief, are *Spirits in Prison*, that is, lost Souls in Hell.

Hell. But tho' this Preacher of Righteousness, whose Life was also consonant to his Doctrine, had very small Success, yet he was glorious in the Eyes of the Lord; he found Grace and Favour with God; for he was preserved in the Ark, when the World of remorseless Sinners were swept away by the Deluge. The Prophets, whom God sent to the Jews to invite them to Repentance, had very small Success, as any one may see who will read their frequent Complaints of the Impenitence and Obduracy of their Hearts. Last of all God sent his Son, authorised, and in an extraordinary Manner qualified, him to declare his Will. He fully and faithfully discharged his Prophetick Office; yet, as was before observed, ISRAEL would not be gathered, after all the Demonstrations he gave of the Divinity of his Mission and Doctrine, confirmed by numerous unquestionable Miracles. Tho his Doctrine was every Way worthy of God, and his Miracles were full of Power and Goodness, and his Life perfectly holy, yet he suffered the most ignominious Death of the Cross. But he was signally glorious in the Eyes of the Lord; God by his Power raised him from the Dead, placed him at his own Right Hand, in Dignity and Power superior to all the Angels in Heaven; and afterwards gave great Success to his Doctrine preach'd by the Apostles

Apostles ; being, after his Ascension, in an extraordinary Manner endowed with Power from on high, and furnished with new miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost. The Foresight of this Glory he should receive, as the Rewards of his Fidelity to the Death, strengthened him to endure the utmost that the Rage and Malice of his Enemies could inflict. The inspired Author to the HEBREWS expresses himself thus, Chap. xii. 2. *For the Joy that was set before him, he endured the Cross, despising the Shame, and is set down at the Right Hand of the Throne of God.* How glorious in the Eyes of the Lord must he be who hath all Judgment committed to him, and will at the last Day appear in his own and in his Father's Glory, attended with an innumerable Company of Angels, to pass a final, definitive, and irreversible, Sentence on all according to their Works ! Then his faithful Servants in the Ministry shall receive their Rewards, in Proportion to their *Sincerity* and *Fidelity* in his Service ; as we may argue from the Perfections of God, and 2dly from his express Word.

1st, From the Divine Perfections. 'Tis contrary to all the Notions we have of the Justice, Goodness, and Wisdom, of God, to suspend the future Rewards of his Servants on a Condition not in their Power to fulfil

fulfil or perform. *Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but it is God only who can give the Increase*, or Success: And this God is alway ready to give to those who come with well-prepared and disposed Minds to hear his Word, and make it their Care to meditate on it, and implore his Blessing. What God expects from his Servants who minister in Holy Things, is, That they sincerely study his Word, and faithfully declare his Will therein revealed: That they explain the Terms and Conditions of Reconciliation, with all the Clearness and Evidence they can, and shew how reasonable and gracious they are: That they keep back nothing that may be profitable to the Souls of their Hearers, and not shun to *declare the whole Counsel of God*: That they give Sinners timely and frequent Warnings of their Danger: That they are exemplary for Holiness, or that they be Examples to Believers in Spirit, in Faith, in Conversation, in Purity, in Charity: That they pray earnestly for Success, and the Blessing of God to attend their Labours. Now, this *Sincerity* of Endeavour is in our Power; and therefore God requires that we use it: But *Success* is not. And, since 'tis not, therefore, I say, 'tis contrary to all the Notions we can form of the Justice, Goodness, and Wisdom of God,

to suppose that such should be deprived of the Reward for not doing that which exceeded all Human Power to do. Moreover, the contrary Supposition would be an unspeakable Discouragement to the Servants of God in the Ministry, if they had any Reason to think that however faithful, zealous, and diligent, they were in endeavouring to promote the Honour of their Lord and Master, and in winning Souls to the Love of God and Religion, whatever shining Examples of Virtue they exhibited to others, yet, for want of *Success*, they should forfeit and be bereaved of their Reward.

What the Reason of Things, grounded on the Divine Perfections, teaches, that the Word of God, which is the Perfection of Reason, confirms. There is nothing is a greater Encouragement to Fidelity, and unfainting Diligence in this important Design and Office, than to be assured, that a righteous God will not forget our Work and Labour of Love, which we undertake, and persevere in, with a Regard to his Glory, and the Welfare and Salvation of immortal Souls. The Reward, you will find, is promised to the *Fidelity* of God's Servants. See MATTHEW xxiv. 45, 46. *Who then is a faithful and wise Servant, whom his Lord hath made*

made Ruler over his Household, to give them Meat in due Season? Blessed is that Servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. See also MATTHEW xxv. 21. His Lord said to him, who had been diligent in improving the Talents committed to his Trust, Well done, thou good and faithful Servant; thou hast been faithful over a few Things, I will make thee Ruler over many Things: Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord. I shall mention but one Place more to this Purpose. See Revelations ii. 10. Be thou faithful to the Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life.

With what unspeakable Pleasure, with what Assurance of Faith, may the Servants of Christ, when they come in view of Death, depend on this glorious Reward! What tho' they may have had but small Success? He from whom they expect to receive the Reward had, during his personal Ministry, very few Disciples and Followers: But, for his Fidelity in discharging his Office, he was glorious in the Eyes of the Lord. And so shall all his faithful Servants be also. When the Redeemer was come in a near View of his Sufferings, he could make this Address to his Heavenly Father, being fully conscious of his Integrity in the Discharge of his important Office; and upon this he grounded

his Plea and Argument for the Reward of consummate Glory and Bliss with God. See St. JOHN xvii. 4, 5. *I have glorified thee on the Earth, I have finished the Work which thou gavest me to do, and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thy self!* Tho' he had laboured almost in vain, and had spent his Strength for nought, yet his Judgment was with the Lord, and his Work with his God. When St. PAUL was ready to be offered, that is, to die a violent Death, and seal the Truth of his Doctrine by his Blood; when the Time of his Departure was at hand, see with what Assurance of the Reward he speaks, II. TIMOTHY vi. 6, 7, 8. *I have fought a good Fight; I have finished my Course; I have kept the Faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will give to me at that Day; and not to me only, but to all them also who love his Appearing.* All those who faithfully fulfil the Ministry, which they have received in the Lord, may likewise, in humble Hope and Trust in the Merits of their Saviour, expect the Crown of Life. He who hath promised it is a Righteous Judge: He will certainly fulfil his Word. The Souls of his upright Servants, as soon as they are dis-united from their Bodies, are present with the Lord, and enjoy as great Degree of Happiness

piness and Joy as Separate Spirits are capable of: But in the Resurrection, when the Body shall be re-united to the perfected Spirits, Happiness will be compleated. The Bodies of the Righteous shall be raised in Conformity to the glorified Body of their Lord. They shall shine as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Hence you may observe that St. PAUL, tho' he knew that when he should be absent from the Body he should be immediately present with the Lord, yet, for a compleat Felicity in Soul and Body, he carried on his Views to the Day of the general Resurrection. Thus, in the Place just referred to, he speaks of that Day with an Emphasis: *When Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall his Servants appear with him in Glory.* They who have turned many to Righteousness, or who have sincerely endeavoured to do so, shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and as the Stars for ever and ever: When Christ the Chief Shepherd shall appear, they shall *receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away.*

I shall conclude with an humble Address to the God of all Grace and Power, in which I doubt not but that you will unite, *viz.* That we may all, both Ministers and People, so faithfully discharge our respective Duties,
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that in the Great Day of the Lord Jesus, when there shall be a Gathering together of all the Righteous who have lived in all Ages in one glorious Assembly, at our Saviour's Right Hand, we may be found in that happy Number. Which may God, of his infinite Mercy, grant, through Christ our Saviour!

S. I. N. I. S.



